



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

ON
EVIL THOUGHTS

CHILCOT



A PRACTICAL TREATISE

CONCERNING

Evil Thoughts

RIVINGTONS

LONDON	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Waterloo Place</i>
OXFORD	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>High Street</i>
CAMBRIDGE	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>Trinity Street</i>

A
PRACTICAL TREATISE
CONCERNING
Evil Thoughts

Wherein their Nature, Origin, and Effect are distinctly considered and explained

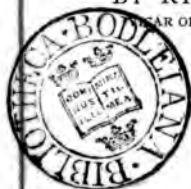
WITH MANY USEFUL RULES FOR RESTRAINING AND SUPPRESSING SUCH
THOUGHTS: SUITED TO THE VARIOUS CONDITIONS OF LIFE AND
THE SEVERAL TEMPERaments OF MANKIND, MORE ESPECIALLY
OF MELANCHOLY PERSONS

By WILLIAM CHILCOT, M.A.

WITH PREFACE AND NOTES

By RICHARD HOOPER, M.A.

OF UPTON AND ASTON UPTHORPE, BERKS



Third Edition

RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

1869

141. k. 291.

"Ecce coram tot millibus populorum nudabuntur omnes iniquitates meae, tot agminibus Angelorum patebunt universa scelera mea; non solum actuum, sed etiam cogitationum, simulque locutionum."

AUGUST. Lib. iv. Medit.

TO
THE REV. EDWARD KING, M.A.

HONORARY CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, VICAR OF CUDDESDON

AND

PRINCIPAL OF THE CUDDESDON THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

WHO

OCCUPYING A POSITION OF GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

FULFILS HIS DUTIES

WITH

A RARE SINGLENESS OF HEART

HOLINESS OF LIFE

AND

CONSCIENTIOUS ZEAL

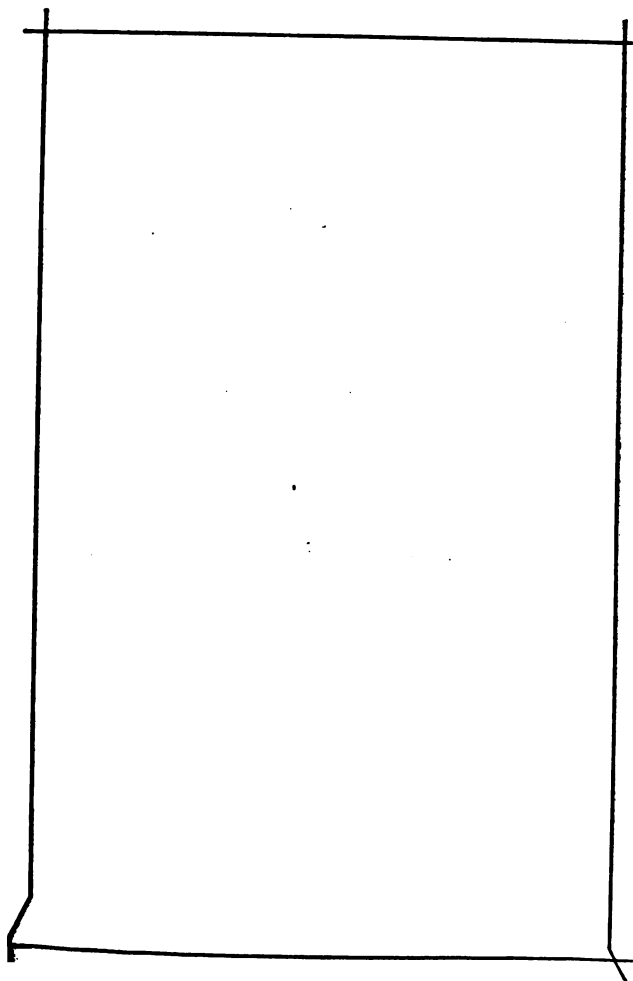
This little Volume is dedicated

WITH MUCH ESTEEM

BY

THE EDITOR.

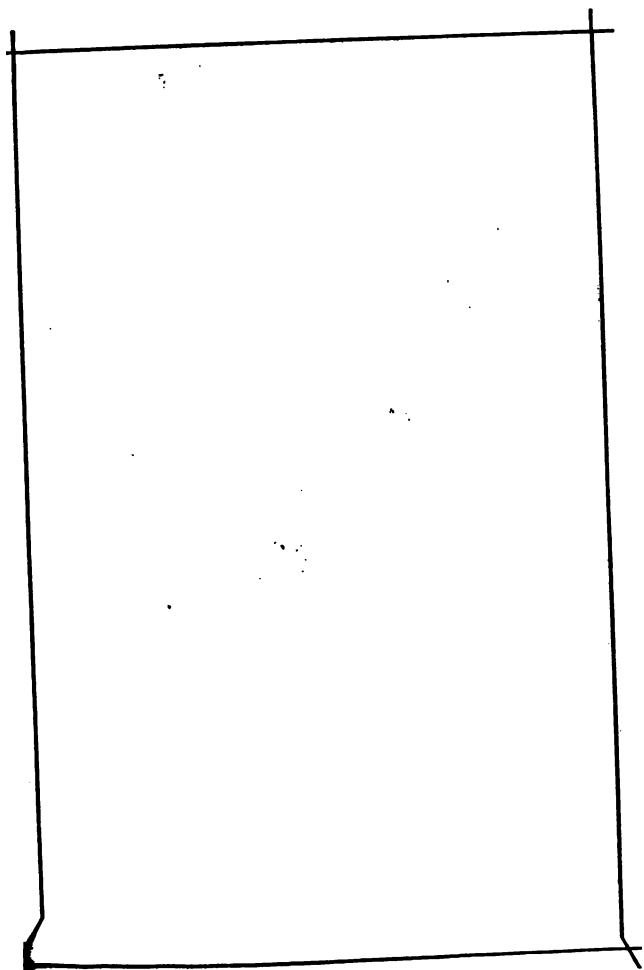
UPTON VICARAGE, *Epiphany*, 1869.



Advertisement

IN sending forth a Third Edition of "Chilcot on Evil Thoughts," I heartily thank Almighty God that I have reason to know that it has been of much comfort to many poor afflicted souls. The two former impressions have been spread far and wide. The late Bishop Wainwright of New York expressed himself greatly pleased with it, and took it with him to the United States, and it has reached our most distant colonies. Little did the writer of the author's epitaph think that the words on his monument, ἀποθανὼν ἔτι λαλεῖται, would be so singularly fulfilled. The present Edition has been printed in a more popular form, and a few notes have been added. May God continue His blessing!

UPTON VICARAGE, *Epiphany*, 1869.



Preface

It is with sincere pleasure that I offer this new Edition of the following excellent little Treatise to the notice of the public. The importance of the subject must be obvious to all. The duty of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5) is so necessary for the attainment of that "~~holiness~~ holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. xii. 14); of that internal purity of heart, to which alone is annexed the promise of the Blessed Vision of God (Matt. v. 8); that any rules for our guidance in performing it must be hailed with joy by those who are earnestly striving to walk in the strait path which leadeth to everlasting life. But while the Government of the Thoughts in general is a subject in which we are all deeply interested, there are some special kinds of *Evil Thoughts* which require a more particular notice, and which are apt to cause much anxiety

and trouble to those who are labouring under them. These have been treated by the author in distinct chapters, and form the chief design of this little book. Persons afflicted in this way, as even the best of us are liable to be, are frequently met with in the ministrations of the parochial clergy; and it has often been a matter of regret to me that I have not been able to place in the hands of those who have come under my own immediate observation, some such work as the present. It was, therefore, with no slight pleasure that I first met with it. Thinking that many of my reverend brethren may have felt a similar want, I have been induced to republish it.

It would be well to remind the afflicted persons that the *sinfulness of Evil Thoughts* consists only so far as we *indulge* them. It is almost impossible to entirely prevent them from arising in our minds; they will come; but we may choose whether we will entertain them or not. It is in our power to do much towards hindering their growth, and rejecting them when they present themselves to us. It has been prettily observed,¹ "In the little garden

¹ *Seed's Works*, vol. i., Sermon ix., ed. 1745.

of the mind, ill thoughts, like weeds, will spring up ; they are the natural produce of the soil. But if we take care to root them up as fast as possible, as well as to cultivate and cherish each generous and beautiful plant, this is all that God requires of us." If, then, we steadily strive to conquer our *Evil Thoughts*, and, under the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, to replace them with *good* and *holy* ones, if we till the soil of our hearts, we shall find that God will vouchsafe a blessing on our endeavours, and give unto us that peace, that inward tranquillity and heavenly-mindedness, which the world cannot give. But we must work. "Good thoughts will not court our acquaintance, and make the first advances to us ; but if we often *read* and *meditate* on religious subjects, if we at stated hours invite them to come and make their abode with us, they will at last come without waiting for the formality of a set invitation."² And I think the rules in this little volume will contribute much to our progress in this work, viz., the control of our *evil*, and cultivation of *good*, thoughts. But of this I must leave the reader to judge.

² See, *ut suprà*.

William Chilcot, the author, descended from an ancient and respectable Devonshire family, originally from Tiverton, was the third son of the Rev. Robert Chilcot, rector of St. Mary Major's, Exeter. He was admitted as a commoner of Balliol College, Oxford, 15th March 1679-80, and on taking his B.A. degree Oct. 16, 1683, he is described as Blundell Scholar, so probably he had been educated at Tiverton School. On proceeding to his M.A. December 1, 1686, he is described as "nuper Socius probandus à fundatione Blundellianâ." He subsequently became rector of the parish of St. George the Martyr, Exeter, in which city he died on the 30th of May 1711, aged forty-eight years, and was buried on the north side of the communion rails of his parish church, which was pulled down some few years ago. On a monument erected to the memory of his daughter was added the following inscription:—

Nec non
Ipsius Gulielmi Chilcot A.M. hujus
Ecclesiæ post nullum memorandi
Rectoris qui post annos Vitæ
Mortalis 48 reverà Cæpit Vi-
vere 30^o die Maij A.D. 1711.
Ἀποθανὼν ἐτι λαλεῖται.

His little book was first published in a small 8vo, Exon, 1698, and is a volume of great rarity. It was reprinted 12mo, London, 1734; also an exceedingly scarce book. William Winstanley Hull, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn, published a very small edition in 32mo, 1835; but it was imperfect, wanting the prayer at the end, as he was unable to procure a perfect copy of the original. Mr. Hull told me he was for twelve years searching for a copy of the Exeter edition. The public having favourably received two former impressions edited by me, in 1851 and 1854, no pains have been spared to render this as accurate as possible. The following curious account of the cause of our author's writing this book may not be uninteresting. It is taken from the autobiography of Samuel Eyles Pierce, a well-known Dissenting preacher, printed London, 1824. Mr. Pierce was the grandson of the Rev. Joseph Chilcot, the author's younger brother, and vicar of Up-Ottery, Devon:—"The present Mr. Chilcot, of Truro, has in his possession a printed 'Treatise on the Origin of Evil Thoughts,' written by Mr. *William Chilcot* of Exeter; the occasion of which was as follows:

A devout lady of Exeter was at times subject to melancholy, and was tempted to destroy herself, and attempted the same, but was prevented in time from accomplishing her purpose. She afterwards made known the cause of her melancholy in confidence to Mr. *William Chilcot*, who kept it a profound secret, but made an improvement upon the circumstance, so as to write the above-mentioned book. In consequence of the afore-cited circumstance, many of the devout people of Exeter would not retire to their private devotions without their servant or some person with them."³

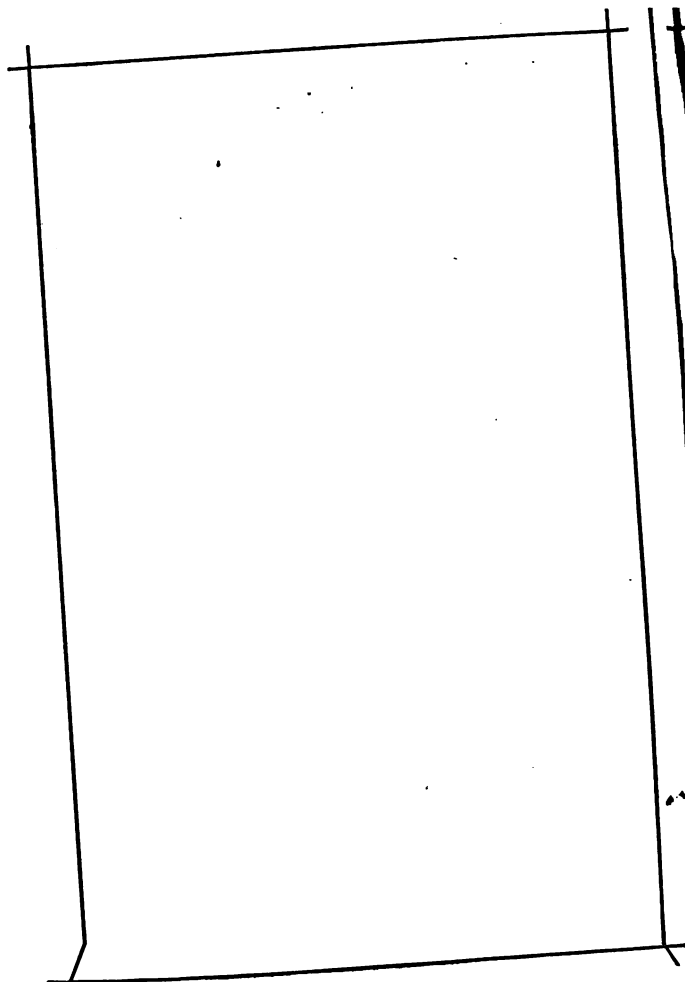
I have little further to add. Chilcot's arms on his monument impale those of the ancient family of Coplestone. He left but one other work; a single sermon "preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter in Exon, April 4, 1697, being Easter Day, and Assize Sunday, 4to, London. Printed by Freeman Collins, for Philip Bishop, bookseller in Exon, 1697."

I have to return my sincere thanks for the kindness and courtesy I have received at the hands of

³ "A True Outline and Sketch of the Life of Samuel Eyles Pierce, Minister of the Everlasting Gospel, written by himself, and printed in 1824 in the Seventy-ninth Year of his Age," p. 2, *note*.

J. G. Chilcott, Esq., of Truro, the lineal descendant of the author's brother Joseph, and the present representative of the family.

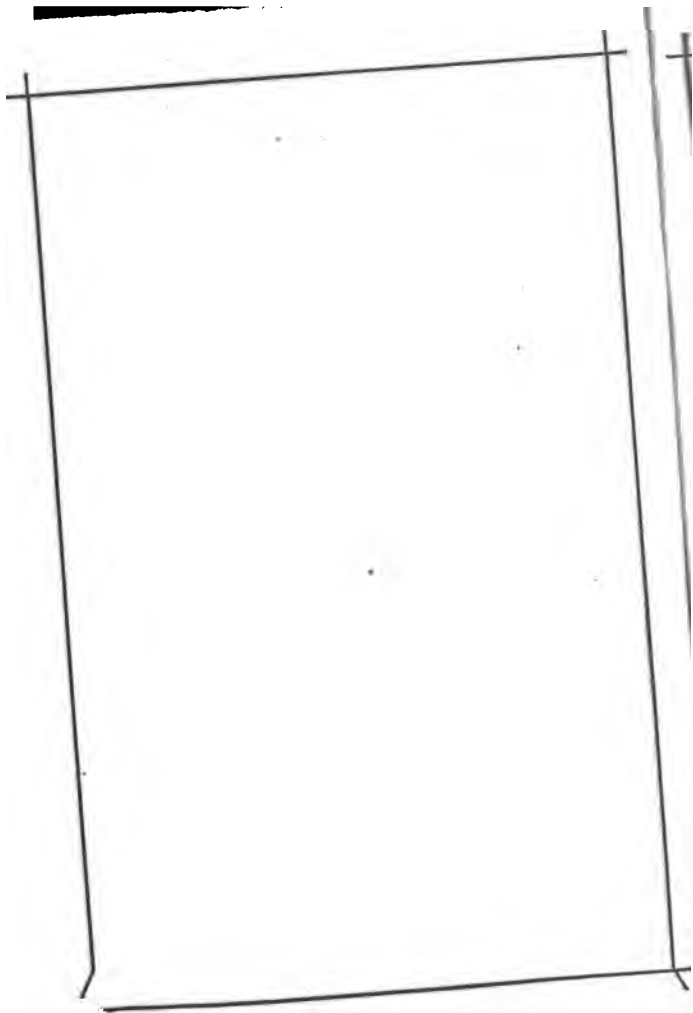
RICHARD HOOPER.



To the Reader

ART thou in search of comfort, and intendest to peruse the following pages for the same? Before thou beginnest, pray to Almighty God to send His Holy Ghost, and pour into thy heart the most excellent gift of Charity, without which all thy doings are nothing worth, and thou art counted dead in His sight. 'Tis Charity quickeneth thy soul, filleth it with goodness, maketh thee love God and all His creatures, and diffuseth joy over thy spirits, for Charity *thinketh no evil*.

R. H.



To the Inhabitants of the Parishes of St.
John, St. *George* the Martyr, and *All-*
Hallows on the Walls, in the City of
Exon.

BRETHREN,

THE following Treatise contains the substance of several Discourses delivered to you from the pulpit. The subject of it is undeniably most useful, and of the greatest importance to our eternal welfare; and the more I consider of it, the more I am persuaded of its moment. And because it is a matter of difficulty too, and requires more lasting attention of the mind, than any person, how well soever disposed, can give to sermons when spoken, I thought fit to publish it, that so you might have these directions always before you, which I hope may somewhat assist you in the performance of so great a work. And as a testimony of my great respect, and an acknowledgment of the many obligations I

have received from you, I have dedicated them to you, the rather hoping that you will the more seriously and earnestly apply them. Whatever defects there are in this Treatise, I hope my sincerity will be sufficient protection to the meanness of my endeavours; all my aim being to contribute to your spiritual and eternal advantage; which is, and shall be always, part of the constant and earnest prayer of

Your daily Orator at the Throne
of Grace,

WILLIAM CHILCOT.

EXON, May 2, 1698.

Contents

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I.	
The Occasion of the Words of the Text	3
CHAPTER II.	
The Advantage of Well-Governing our Thoughts	6
CHAPTER III.	
The Source of Evil Thoughts ; the Obligation to Restrain them ; and our Ability so to do	16
CHAPTER IV.	
General Rules and Directions for the Virtuous Government of the Thoughts	23
CHAPTER V.	
Profane and Blasphemous Thoughts	42
CHAPTER VI.	
Impure and Unclean Thoughts	57
CHAPTER VII.	
Malicious and Uncharitable Thoughts	64

CHAPTER VIII.

PAGE

Wandering Thoughts	69
------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IX.

Melancholy and Despairing Thoughts	81
--	----

CHAPTER X.

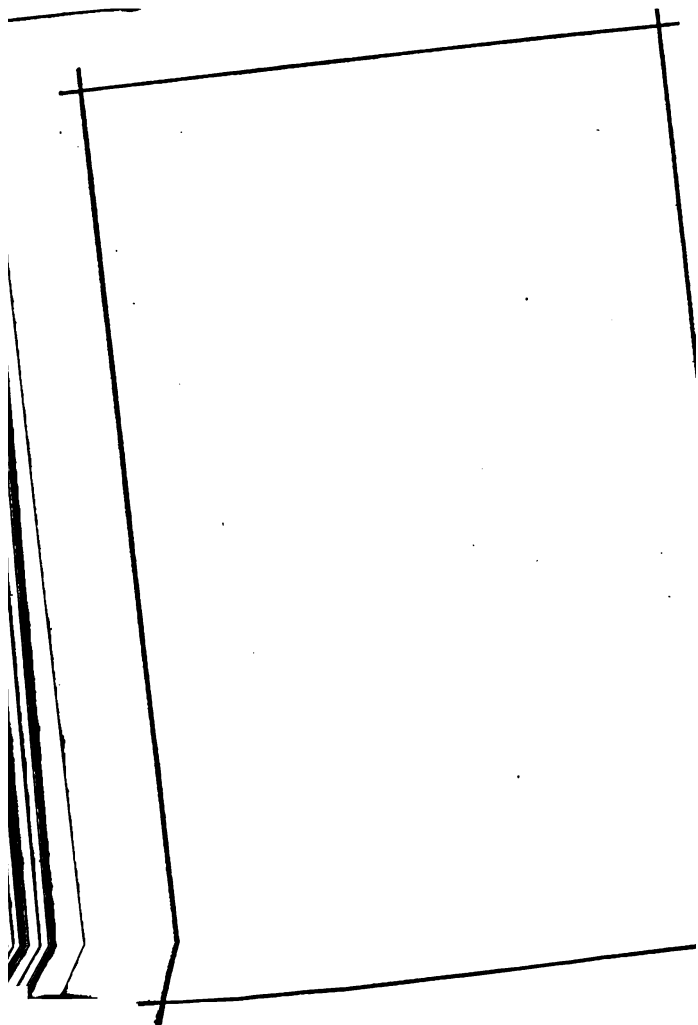
Conclusion	99
----------------------	----

A PRAYER for a Melancholy Person	102
--	-----

A PRACTICAL TREATISE

CONCERNING

Evil Thoughts



A PRACTICAL TREATISE

CONCERNING

Evil Thoughts

INTRODUCTION

"For out of the heart proceed Evil Thoughts."—MATT. xv. 15

I AM now entered upon a subject which demands more than ordinary attention of the reader. The government of the thoughts is what I intend to discourse on from these words; which, as it is a matter of the greatest importance, so it is a thing of no small difficulty. Few medicines can reach internal wounds, and he is an artist indeed that can cure them. But notwithstanding the difficulty, I have attempted it; and shall lay before you the

1/2

best method that I can, in order to the well-governing of the thoughts. Which when attained, is an achievement above those of the greatest conquerors, and deserves trophies beyond the most famous exploits of victory that ever were made; the wisest of men telling us, *That he that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city*, Prov. xvi. 32. And our own experience confirms this sentence of the wise man. For there is nothing a

A

more common observation than that great generals and captains, who have carried their arms through distant nations, and have done wonders, and even brought the world into subjection, have yet been slaves to their own selves, tamely yielding to their own corrupt and wicked hearts, and have not obtained a conquest over their own thoughts. They have not avoided soiling their triumphs with their vices, and aspersing their glorious actions with a wicked life. As if the reward of their best actions were to be their worst, and as if it were a crown to their arms to be dissolved in lust, and all manner of impieties; as if the blessing of success were riot and intemperance, and the greatest of sins to be their heralds. What can be a greater and truer reflection than this? which as it takes off from the credit and applause of the noblest actions, so it serves to shew us, that it is a more *difficult task* to conquer

our own thoughts than the most potent adversaries; to subdue our hearts and souls than whole battalions; and that man is the greatest enemy to himself: *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.* He that searcheth the heart, and knoweth the thoughts, spake these words.

The occasion on which He spake them shall be the *first thing* which I shall consider.

Secondly, I shall shew the vast advantage of well-governing our thoughts, in order to the purposes of religion in general.

Thirdly, That *evil thoughts* arise out of the heart, and proceed from thence; which lays an obligation on us of restraining them; and how far we are able so to do.

Fourthly, I shall lay down some general rules and directions for our easier and better performing of this great, and difficult, and absolutely necessary work, of well-governing the thoughts. And,

Fifthly, I shall select

some special kinds of *evil thoughts*, and shall discourse more particularly

and distinctly of them, and what are the proper remedies against them.

CHAPTER I

The occasion of the words of the text

THE occasion on which our Blessed Lord and Saviour spake these words, *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*—was this :

The Scribes and Pharisees, who were the teachers and expounders of the Jewish Law, and whose business it was to give the true meaning of it, instead of that did grossly pervert the real design, sense, and meaning of it, put erroneous and false glosses upon it, and many times imposed their own traditions upon the people in the place of it. And yet none pretended a more strict observance of the Law than they. Insomuch that we find them in the beginning of this chapter, with an usual arrogance,

demanding of our Saviour, *Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread*, ver. 2. To which our Saviour gives this answer ; *viz.* That they of all men had the least reason to tax His disciples with the neglect of such a ceremony as washing before meat ; as if that were such an invasion upon tradition, and a crying sin ; when they themselves were guilty of a much greater, in endeavouring to vacate the obligation of the Fifth Commandment, by falsely supposing a case which would discharge them from honouring and relieving their parents ; and so making void the Commandment

of God by their own tradition, with a witness. Their Corban, *Mark* vii. 11, 12, was an effectual way to cover their avarice, and they could not have invented a more colourable pretence to varnish over their most sordid and unnatural temper than that was.

And indeed this was their common method, when they had any wicked design in hand, then to seem most religious; and when they *made long prayers*, it was but too sure a sign of their devouring widows' houses. And for this reason our Blessed Lord doth so often and so severely rebuke them; particularly here, where, after He had given them such an answer as He did, He exposeth and layeth them open to the people, and censures the vanity and hypocrisy of all their religious pretensions. And directing His discourse to the people, He assures them that true religion consisteth not in *such outward washings*

and cleansings, and ceremonious purgations, but in the Spiritual and inward purification of the mind and soul, the fountain of all our thoughts and imaginations, and of our actions the product of them. That if the heart be pure and holy, the thoughts, and then the actions, will be so too; but if the heart be foul and wicked, the issues of it will be correspondent. When the spirit of a man is truly seasoned with religion, it will shew itself in all the beauteous and lovely fruits of righteousness; but when the principle is vicious and debauched, the effects must and will be filthy and abominable. That a man is not defiled by any material thing that he either eats or drinks, but by his own imaginations, desires, and affections; *the things which come out of him. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies; these*

are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

All the ceremonial part of the Jewish Law aimed at, and terminated in this. Their Ceremonies were significations and types of matters under the Gospel; and their frequent washings and cleansings, were to denote the Spiritual purifying of the heart and soul.

It is true, God enjoined them to be observed for a time, the ignorance and nonage of the Jews requiring such a material and gross way of instruction; but these were all abolished and done away, at the Coming of the Messiah, when the Son of God Himself became our Divine Instructor and Teacher, and informed mankind of the nature of that rational and Spiritual worship, which God did expect from us, and would be acceptable to Him. That it was the devotion of the soul, the purity of the heart, the spirituality

of the thoughts, that living sacrifice alone, that would please God Who is an Infinite Spirit, and prepare us for the refined joys of heaven, and the exalted pleasures of Seraphims; and consequently, that the greatest and most important duty, incumbent on mankind, was to govern the heart and subdue the thoughts. This then, in short, was the occasion of our Saviour's speaking these words; which did effectually humble these proud Pharisees, whose whole religion was mere pomp and outward show, and consisted merely in broad phylacteries, an affected garb, and demure looks, while these *gaudy and painted sepulchres were within full of all manner of rottenness and uncleanness*; and at the same time lets us see a description of true religion, and how excellent and noble an institution that is, which extends to the inmost recesses of the soul, and so tends to refine the very thoughts

of the heart, and to fit men for the pure state of angels ; and, therefore, is far above all other institutions that ever were in the world before.

CHAPTER II

The advantage of well-governing our thoughts

THE next thing proposed to be handled is the vast advantage of well-governing of our thoughts, in order to the purposes of religion in general. Now this advantage is very great and obvious. Every person must be convinced that the most proper and only way for a man to live well, is to begin at his heart ; to put his thoughts into a true order and government. For otherwise, there can be no uniformity in his piety. The good actions that he doth are broken and imperfect ; and he is apt every now and then to make fresh work for repentance, by returning to his old sins. But this advantage of the well-

governing our thoughts will be the better seen by some particulars.

I. *First then, a care of our thoughts is the greatest preservative against actual sins.* It is a most certain truth, that the greatest sin that ever was committed was at first but a thought. The foulest wickedness, and most monstrous impiety, arose from so small a speck as a first thought may be resembled to. The most horrid thing that ever was done, as well as the most noble and virtuous action that ever was accomplished, had no greater a beginning. Of such a quick growth and spreading nature is sin, that it rivals even the kingdom of heaven, which, our Lord

telleth us, *is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown up (in those countries) it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it,* Matt. xiii. 31. But the Apostle St. James, Chap. i. 13, 14, 15, represents it by a simile of another nature, comparing the original and growth of it to the formation of an embryo in the womb. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when his lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.*¹ It is conceived,

¹ An old writer, in warning against the evil impressions we may receive through the senses (viz. of sight or hearing, &c.), observes: "All these, like the

bred, lives, and grows in a man, till at last it domineers in him, and reigns in his mortal body. Rom. vi. 12. And therefore it is absolutely necessary, that we govern and manage our thoughts, without which it will be impossible that we should avoid falling into actual sins, even the greatest; that we resist the beginnings, the very first emergencies of evil, if we hope to avoid the last degrees of it.

It is manifest folly to imagine that we can indulge evil thoughts, without being in danger of committing actual sins, or that speculation and practice are things so vastly distant from each other. This is so far from being true, that there can be

estriches' egges covered, perhaps for a time, in the sand, untill the warm sun shall ripen and enliven them, will quicken in the minde of man in the heat of temptation, or perhaps will of themselves break forth into a temptation, and receive consummation, according to the doctrine of Saint James, Chap. i., &c."—*Scrivener's "Method and Means of True Spirituall Life,"* p. 262, ed. 1688.

nothing more certain than the contrary. If we would preserve ourselves from falling into actual sins, we must govern and suppress our thoughts; and if we would have our life pure and unspotted, the heart must be kept in entire subjection. If we would not be plunged into the guilt of presumptuous sins, we must be sure to resist the first motions of evil, all unlawful thoughts. For no man is always in the same temper; his resolution is not ever the same as it may be now, or at another time. His passions are fluctuating; sometimes there is (as it may be called) a spring-tide of them. And a man at some seasons is more receptive of evil impressions, more yielding and easy to be tempted, than at others. And though an evil thought may not so strongly move him at one time, yet it may at another. And every encouragement of it, adds to the falseness and treachery of **his** own deceitful and wicked heart,

which will betray him whenever an opportunity offers. And therefore he is necessitated to be nicely careful over his thoughts, if he would not fall into actual sins.

Let us think as boldly and confidently of ourselves as we please, let us rest never so much upon our own strength, it is our weakness. It is not our presuming thoughts of ourselves that will make us invincible. Nay, there are none sooner overcome and thrown down than such as conceit great and mighty things of themselves. The shameful Denial of the warm and boasting Apostle, *Matt.* xxvi. 70, 72, 74, should be sufficient to convince us that the best of men are not above that advice, *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*, 1 Cor. x. 12. If we do not keep a strict watch, and a careful hand over our thoughts, they will inevitably betray us when an opportunity serves, and make most

furious assaults upon us, when we are least aware of it. We can no more restrain them when we please (whatever we think), we can no more stop them from breaking out, than we can smother a raging flame, or chain a foaming billow. And, therefore, whosoever he be that allows his thoughts an extravagant liberty, he is much mistaken if he thinks that he is sure to stop there.

II. But admit that he could: Can it be thought by any rational creature that God doth not take any notice of his thoughts themselves? Suppose it were in the power of any person to act contrary to his habit of thinking, and to avoid the practice of those sins which he indulges himself in the speculation of, hath an Omniscient and an Holy God, think you, no regard to the thoughts, and the inward temper and disposition of the soul? If we think so, then we have mean thoughts of Him in-

deed; and make religion degenerate into the service of brute beasts. For wherein doth man differ from them but in his *reason* and *thought*, and that he is capable of knowing God, of being ravished with His excellencies and perfections, and encouraged by His suitable rewards, and taking delight in the glorious communications of Himself to his soul, and serving Him with his whole heart, and being united to Him by a life of thought? Upon which consideration it must needs follow, that the Great God is so far from disregarding our thoughts, that He hath a principal respect to them. And though it should chance that they should never break out into actions, and gross practices, yet God looks to the *inward parts*; is a narrow Observer, and Searcher of the thoughts; is pleased when His Throne is established in the soul, and His *Dominion* and Empire over all its thoughts

and imaginations; and abhors and abandons an unclean, wicked, or rebellious heart. To Him all the pomp of religion and splendour of outward performances is without it detestable. *Isa. i. 11.* The soul is the seat of religion; as for the parts and members of our bodies, they are entirely at the command of the mind. The understanding and will are their despotic rulers. And as the heart and the thoughts are disposed, so is the practice and conversation; and therefore, them the Almighty principally regards. As a Man can never testify the truth of his love to God, or evidence the sincerity of his soul, without having a special regard to the well-governing of his thoughts; so without it, damnation may justly be his portion, though the plague break not out in the botches and ulcers of a profligate conversation, though the pollution be concealed and hidden. Indeed if we are

so profane as to think of God as a man, and esteem Him to be such an one as ourselves; if His Eye could not penetrate any deeper than ours, but were fallible and weak; if He could not see into our breasts, and discover the secrets of our hearts; then there might be some reason for us to imagine that He did not regard our thoughts, so our visible behaviour were smooth and untainted. But since He is an All-seeing and an All-knowing God, and professedly declares Himself such in the Sacred Scriptures, *Psa. cxxxix.*, the reason of man cannot submit to such an idle fancy as this, *viz.* that He hath no respect to a man's thoughts; but on the contrary, must believe, that He hath an especial eye to them, and will assuredly call us to an account for them at the Day of Judgment.

For though our Saviour's discourse, *Matt. xxii. 36*, extends only to every idle word, yet in

the very verse before He shews that the heart is principally regarded, and therefore to be observed by ourselves. And more fully and clearly in His divine Sermon on the Mount, Matt. v. 20. *For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.* And ver. 27. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.* From all which it plainly appears, that if a man could indulge himself in

all manner of licentious thoughts without any further danger, yet that, God knows, is evil sufficient, because the *thoughts of the heart* are principally regarded by Almighty God.² But indeed it is

² We should remember that "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. xxiv. 9). And here I would briefly detain the reader. Juvenal, Satire xiii. 210, says,—

"Nam scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,
Facti crimen habet——"

Gifford's version—

"For, in the eye of heaven, a wicked deed
Devised, is done——"

Mr. Gifford has an interesting note. He thinks that the doctrines delivered by Juvenal in the passage immediately preceding, are of so pure and sublime a morality, that they are such as the light of nature alone was incapable of discovering; and which the author undoubtedly derived from that "true light" which now began to glimmer through the Roman world, and by which many sincere lovers of truth and virtue already began to direct their ways, while they were yet unconscious of the medium through which they received the illumination. With respect to this special passage, it is not heathenism. It is not to be found in the precepts of their gravest teachers: and elevated as the morality of Juvenal confessedly is, it is difficult to imagine it could soar so far above the ethics of his time without the above-mentioned as-

hardly possible to imagine how any person that is *careless of his heart*, should be otherwise of his *life*; or how he that is vain, filthy, or any way vicious in his imaginations, can be pure and holy, sober and religious, in his conversation and practice. Upon both which accounts we see the *vast advantage* that we shall *infallibly reap* by being diligent and careful in the *well-governing of our thoughts*. But,

Thirdly, That which will serve to make us further sensible of the *great*

advantage of well-governing our thoughts, is this, viz. *That we shall ever be in a preparation for the best and most weighty duties by this means*. We shall not only be able to resist and repel the fury of temptations, but be ready for the performance of every duty. Those men that have not inured themselves to a habit of thought, and constantly exercised a strict regimen over the motions of their own hearts, will require a great deal of time to recollect and order their thoughts, and reduce them into a proper frame and posture. Those that carelessly give their minds a loose, as soon as any solemn and weighty duty is over, and suffer their thoughts to return to the old subject of the world, or any other of their vanities, the same difficulty will attend them to bring their thoughts into a due frame again which did at first. So that they will thereby be mightily hindered in their advances in religion. Their progress

sistance. What is more, this was the peculiar boast of Christianity. It was the vantage ground on which its first professors stood, and proclaimed aloud the superiority of their faith. "*Vos*" (says Minucius Felix), i.e. *Ethnici*, "*scelera admissa punitis; apud nos et cogitare peccare est: vos conscios timetis; nos etiam conscientiam*," &c. The passage from Minucius Felix is in cap. xxxv. Davies (ed. Cantab. 1712) quotes Seneca, who, however, might have been subject to the same influence as Juvenal; he also refers us to Cujacius for a proof that under the Roman laws "*non facti solum sed et voluntatis pœna luebatur*." I think, however, Mr. Gifford has raised an interesting question.

in holiness will be much retarded ; they labour in a circle ; or at best they will move but slowly on, in the way to heaven, in comparison of those that keep a constant and strict government over their thoughts. These latter will be able always to say with the Psalmist, *O God my heart is ready, my heart is ready*, Psa. cviii.

1. And what an happy and desirable temper of soul is this ! What spiritual comforts and benefits do these enjoy, which others for want of a due care and watchfulness deprive themselves of ! These only want an opportunity of serving God and performing holy duties ; others want a due temper and disposition when they have an opportunity. While the thoughts of others are just fluttering above the ground, theirs are in the third heaven. While they are tuning their souls and putting them in frame, these are joining in hallelujahs with the angels. In a word, these who have

attained to this happy government of their thoughts may be resembled to the *wise virgins, who had their lamps burning, and entered in with the Bridegroom to the marriage, whilst the foolish virgins were but trimming theirs* ; Matt. xxv. 6. So great is the advantage which they have above other Christians.

Fourthly, The advantage of this great duty of well-governing our thoughts is great upon this account also, *viz.* Because nothing so much conduceth to *quiet* the thoughts, and *compose* the mind, as this doth. The greatest part of our trouble and perturbation proceeds from want of a due care of, and watchfulness over our thoughts. And many times our troubles are so great that they convince us of the absolute necessity of this duty ; because then we find that nothing else can give us ease under them, or quiet our spirits. Now peace and tranquillity of mind is a very con-

siderable help to religion. When a man's *soul* and *thoughts* are quiet, he goes smoothly on, seems to enjoy *that glorious liberty of the children of God*, which the Apostle speaks of, *Rom. viii. 21.* He hath a true relish of the sweets of religion; his soul is dilated and enlarged, and he is able to *run the ways of God's Commandments*. Whereas there is but a slender furtherance in *good*, but small improvements, when the thoughts are hurried, the imaginations tumultuary, and the soul in an unhappy disorder, by any domineering and contrary lusts, or any other cause. The soul of any wicked man is a mere *ἀταξία*, disorder and confusion, and all the powers and faculties of his mind are as it were up in arms against each other. *There is no peace*, Isa. xlviii., there cannot be, but all is misrule and uproar. And could we but behold it with our corporeal eyes, never such a confused scene, as that is, repre-

sented itself to our view. It is an emblem of Hell itself. He can scarcely enjoy the benefit of one calm and sedate thought. Lust, anger, revenge, ambition, and a thousand more, would every one of them be kings, and usurp supremacy, and therefore; *war in, and against the soul*, 1 Pet. ii. 11. Reason, who is the rightful sovereign, hath the least share in this polity. Rebellious slaves aspire to the throne, and boldly prescribe to their prince. The fundamental laws of nature are subverted, and all become most deplorably ruinous and confused. Whereas the soul of a good man, and one that is diligent in the well-governing of his thoughts, is most quiet, peaceable, and composed. All his thoughts and faculties are in good order, and then he is fit for anything, and can do his duty with far more ease than others can. The present harmony and peace of his mind renders him capable of effectually minding the

things which belong to his everlasting peace. In a word, the advantage of this happy governing our thoughts, is so great, that we can hardly perform anything that is acceptable to God without it, in some measure. We cannot be easy to ourselves, or serviceable to others, we can neither mind the business of our general nor particular callings as we ought without it. But he that is so happy as to have attained a command and dominion over his thoughts, does and suffers everything well. He acts with conscience, suffers with patience. He acts with vigour, suffers with courage. He does his duty with half that difficulty, and endures afflictions with less disorder than others do or can. And having approved himself to God by an internal and spiritual obedience, *by truth in his inward parts*, Psa. ii. 6, by the subjection of his very thoughts to His most pure and holy Law, he shall at

the last and dreadful Day of Judgment be able to look up with joy and comfort to the Eternal Judge and Searcher of all hearts. And when the secrets of all mankind shall be disclosed, all the hidden things of darkness, all the mysteries of ungodliness; when all the clandestine impurities of the hearts and souls of the whole world shall be revealed and published; then shall he glory in his sincerity, and the purity of his thoughts, and the honesty of his intentions. Then shall he avoid that everlasting shame which shall confound the minds and cover the faces of the wicked and ungodly, the *Pharisaical* professors, and the crafty hypocrites; when all the secret filth of their hearts, thoughts, and imaginations, shall be exposed to the view of angels and men, and thrown back in their faces; when the gaudy disguise shall be taken off, and sinners appear to be what they really are. Which is a

most astonishing consideration, and such as should awaken us all to the utmost diligence and watchfulness in the well-governing our thoughts.

Having thus briefly shewn you the great benefit and advantage of well-governing our thoughts

(which deserved to be much more largely handled, but that I would not burden your thoughts while I am attempting to instruct you how to govern them) I proceed to discourse on the third thing laid down.

CHAPTER III

The source of evil thoughts; the obligation to restrain them; and our ability so to do

I COME now in the next place to shew, *That evil thoughts arise out of the heart, and proceed from thence; which lays an obligation on us of restraining and governing them; and how far we are able so to do.* Our Saviour here assures us, that *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.* The heart (*i.e.* the soul) of man is a sink of corruption and uncleanness. It is desperately wicked. It is Pandora's box, which lets

fly innumerable plagues and mischiefs. It is *naturally* the *Source* of wickedness. And let a man but look into himself, and survey his own heart, he will see the greatest cause to bewail his corruptions, and find that there is nothing more deserves his complaints, and tears, than his own heart. What a pest, what an enemy does he always carry about with him! *It is not an open enemy, but a familiar friend, that*

doth him the greatest hurt and dishonour. The snake is lurking in his own breast; and while he is looking and gazing abroad this most perfidious and deadly foe is a domestic one. His own heart is the worst of traitors to him, and the most implacable enemy that he hath cannot do him half that mischief which he receives from himself. It is upon this account St. Paul exclaims, *O wretched man that I am!* Rom. vii. 24.—And David, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!* Psa. li. 10. *Create in me*—It is a work of Omnipotence; and That God alone Who made the worlds, and raised all things out of nothing, can renew the heart and purify the soul from its natural filth and corruption. It is the Holy Spirit is that fire that must purge and refine the drossy mass. Acts ii. 3. The Divine Grace alone can restore health and vigour to the cor-

rupt, depraved, degenerate heart of man. And that will never be wanting to our sincere endeavours. It will operate *with* our endeavours, but not *without* them. Something is in our power, in order to it; and let us do that, and the rest the Grace of God will supply. And one of the greatest incentives to make us use our utmost endeavours is, the serious consideration of the sinfulness and corruption of our own heart. It is necessary therefore that we do not take a *slight* and *transient* view only; but be engaged in a *deep* and *accurate* investigation of ourselves; search every corner of that cell, every recess of that labyrinth, with as much earnestness as the Jews did for leaven, *Exod.* xii. And upon an impartial view, we shall find our Lord's words verified: *Out of the heart proceed all evil thoughts.* No good, properly so called, proceeds from thence, but what is the effect of the

operations of the Blessed Spirit of God. It is not the natural issue of the soul, but the product of His Heavenly Inspirations, Who is continually striving with man, and endeavouring to consecrate and hallow all his thoughts and affections, that so he may be acceptable to God. Every good thought, every religious flight, or sacred desire, is stirred up by Him, is His immediate suggestion, Who is wrestling with the stubborn and rebellious powers of our souls, and with our impure imaginations, to reduce them into their proper order and condition. Or else it is the whisper of some good angel commissioned by Him, who is willing to perform a god-like act of charity to us, that we may raise up our minds to their proper object; and lends us wings to mount up to the highest heaven withal. For the heart of man *naturally* is full of evil, and out of it *proceed all kind of wicked*

thoughts, and vain imaginations. It disembogues such impure steams and contagious exhalations, as blast and infect the whole world. It is an *Asphalites*, a Dead Sea, which sends up most noxious vapours. It is from the heart that all the evil in the world originally proceeds; and therefore it is a most natural piece of advice, that whenever we behold any evil in any part, or instance, of the whole creation, we presently lay our hand upon our breast, look into ourselves, and examine our own heart. It is folly to lay the blame upon this and that and the other thing, when we should trace the evil to its fountain-head. It is most true that all the vile and sinful thoughts, the basest and most abominable lusts, proceed from the heart; but when they are bred out of the corruption, and putrefaction of the heart itself, and when cast into it by the *Devil*, it is not so easy to determine. The accursed

enemy of our souls doth (no doubt) lay hold on all opportunities to cast into our minds wicked thoughts; and is very watchful of the times and seasons, when to corrupt and debauch our souls, and make them yet more vile than naturally they are. And therefore these wicked thoughts which many timorous souls imagine to be their own, may be rationally presumed to be his. There are indeed some marks which probably may serve to distinguish the Devil's injections, from our own cogitations. As when they are monstrously profane and blasphemous; when they assault us all of a sudden with a tempestuous vehemence, filling us with terror and amazement; or else when they are such thoughts as contradict all the interests of human nature; as when a man thinks of murdering and destroying himself. Such a thought cannot well be supposed to be the issue of the heart

itself, though very corrupt, but rather thrown in by the *Devil, who was a murderer from the beginning*. But I say as to the greater part of evil thoughts, it is no easy matter to know which are our own, or which are the *Devil's*. As for those that are the immediate result of the heart, the *Devil* is very quick and ready to improve them. And for those which are the *Devil's* injections, our corrupt hearts are too willing to comply with them; so that we must think ourselves equally obliged to guard ourselves against the one and the other. And there is something unquestionably in our power in order to it. We can do something towards it; unless we will look upon ourselves as machines, and so destroy both reason and religion at once. I will agree that by an hypochondriac, or some other disease, or by a long series and habit of sinning, which is a disease more inveterate and

harder to be cured, that the œconomy of the soul and spirits may be so broken and shattered, that the power of thinking is become very weak and impaired; and that the lassitudes of the soul are as great almost as those of the body. But yet I think there are few cases, but a man can do something in order to a regular thinking. Few men are arrived to so great a degree of either, as to be able to do nothing towards it; though it must be granted some can do much more than others. Our Blessed Lord, when He was upon earth, did not give useless descriptions of things, and deal with men otherwise than rational creatures; and therefore I cannot but suppose that when He shews them that out of *the heart proceed evil thoughts*, it was to this end that they should endeavour to govern and subdue them.

Now we may lay down *this as a certain truth*,

(viz.) that *evil thoughts*, whatsoever they be, *do not endanger our eternal salvation further than we comply with them*. They are not our sins further than we indulge them. But totally to hinder them I think is a thing impracticable. *It is impossible but that such offences will come*.¹ And I believe the holiest men find it so, so long as they are in a world where there are so many objects, and in a state where there are so many imperfections. But yet when wicked thoughts arise in our minds, we may certainly choose whether we will harbour and embrace them or not.² This

¹ "Quia impossibile est in sensum hominis non irruere cogitationis motum et medullarum calorem. Ille laudatur, ille prædicatur beatus qui statim ut ceperit cogitare interficit cogitatus, et allidit eos ad petram. Petra autem erat Christus."—*Hieron. ad Eustochium, Gemma Prædicantium*, ed. Basil, 1508, fol. xciii.

² "Potest equidem diabolus excitare cogitationis motus, sed in te est si vuleris dare vel negare consensusum."—*Bernardus, Gemma Prædic.*, ut supra.

Augustin, "Sed licet diabolus possit suggestionem immittere,

we may do, as long as we have any liberty of will left. So much is unquestionably in our power. Though it is confessed they will make frequent returns upon us, and every now and then with great importunity present themselves to us, though but the last moment we thrust them out. Like an importunate creditor, or an impertinent guest, they will obtrude themselves upon us, do what we can, and if we tell them we have never so great and weighty business, they will still be troublesome and haunt us, while we are actually engaged in it; nay, will pursue us even to the sanctuary, and assault us at the altar of God. Yet if we as often thrust them out as they return, they will never be charged upon us. For it

non tamen nisi volentem ad peccatum adducere." Gregory, "Debilis est hostis qui non vincit nisi volentem." Augustin, "Diabolus quidem suggerit consilium, sed Deo auxiliante necessarium est eligere vel refutare quod suggerit." —*Gemma Præd.*, *ibid.*

is a giving them encouragement, and a compliance with them, that makes us criminal. Then alone thoughts will be imputed to us as our sins, when we are pleased with them, or when we do not abominate and cast them out as soon as they come into our minds, as soon as we have power to discover that they are sinful. It is true the Devil may continue to disquiet and disturb the peace and tranquillity of our consciences, by his wicked injections, and putting into our minds evil thoughts; but though they are our grief and molestation, yet they (being resisted) are his sins, and God will judge him for them, and spare and pity us. *God knows whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust.* The Blessed Jesus assumed our nature, and therefore well knows how to compassionate us in such circumstances. He was Himself solicited by the accursed Tempter, *Matt. iv.*, but He did not

yield to him, but resisted him; and if we follow our Lord's example, and do so too, if he doth not presently flee from us, yet it is not our sin, but unhappiness, to be infested with him. And this certainly we are able to do, we may undoubtedly choose whether we will consent to wicked thoughts, and approve them, or not. If they do indeed meet with a kind entertainment at our hands, no wonder that they grow bold, and familiar; but if we deny them admittance, and shut them out, we shall at length be rid of them, or at least they will not be charged upon us. Even the *Devil* is put to flight by resistance, as St. James tells us, Chap. iv. 7. He remembers his apostasy; he trembles at the Name of *Jesus*; and when a *Christian* behaves himself bravely against him, he doth not care to abide the combat. If we give the same reply to all his suggestions as our Blessed Lord did, our trouble is

greater than our danger. If we would but be watchful over ourselves, and have as much care as we can of our thoughts, I am apt to think, we should not complain so much of them as we often do. It is much for want of a due observation of ourselves, and keeping our hearts with all diligence, that so many evil thoughts proceed from thence. The malignity or folly of our imaginations is much owing to ourselves, to our own sloth and carelessness, to idleness, or to an habit of sin, or some such cause; and when it is so, we ought to repent of them, and look on them as our sins. Though the corruption of our nature, and the malice of the Devil, be many times the cause of them, yet we ourselves are often more chargeable with them, than either of these; and if we narrowly and truly examine ourselves, we shall find it so.

Upon the whole, it is sufficiently plain, that *out*

of the heart proceed evil thoughts; the soul is the soil where this hemlock is sown. There wicked thoughts are conceived; they owe their original either to the corruption of the soul itself, or are thrown in by the instigations of the Devil. From thence they proceed; and therefore it must be acknowledged that *there doth lie an obligation on us of well-governing them*; that we are not altogether unable to do anything in order to it, but something is in our power.³

³ Coleridge tells us (*Table-Talk*,

We can choose whether we will cherish them or not; we can either bid them welcome, or bid them be gone.

And besides we can use other helps and assistances, and follow these rules and directions, which are necessary to the well-governing our thoughts. And what they are, is the subject of the following chapter.

p. 61, ed. 3) that the great Bishop Butler "was all his life struggling against the devilish suggestions of his senses, which would have maddened him if he had relaxed the stern watchfulness of his reason for a single moment."

CHAPTER IV

General rules and directions for the virtuous government of the thoughts

THE rules and directions which we are to follow, in order to the better performance of this great work (*viz.*) the virtuous and religious government of our thoughts, are divided into

I. general

And II. particular.

The general will have relation to all kinds of Evil Thoughts, whatsoever they be. The latter will concern chiefly these

sorts of them hereafter mentioned.

The general rules and directions then are these following.

I. First *Prayer; constant and fervent prayer*. This is a *catholicon*, a sovereign remedy for every ail and indisposition of the Soul. It is *very powerful with God*, Gen. xxxii. 28, *and availeth much*, James v. 16. It is a preservative from the violence of temptations, and a defence against all kinds of evil thoughts. Prayer, as it engageth the Divine favour, and the protection of Almighty God in all cases, so it naturally cleanseth and purifieth the heart, keeps it in a due frame, and religious temper. The soul is thereby prompted and disposed to that which is good, and ponderates towards God. It gives a relish of Divine and Spiritual things, and makes the soul more and more averse to all evil, vain, or silly thoughts and imaginations. And therefore if we desire to be

preserved from wicked thoughts, to keep our hearts in due temper and government, we should be constant and earnest in our approaches to the throne of grace daily, and fervent in our prayers to God for His Grace, to assist us in conquering the stubbornness and irregularity of our thoughts and imaginations. That He would be pleased to take possession of our souls by His Holy Spirit; and by Him to govern, subdue, and sanctify all the motions, powers, and faculties of our souls. That no unclean spirit may inhabit there; but that they may be *swept and garnished* in the best sense, and ever prepared to receive the visits of Heaven, and the benign influences of the Holy Ghost.

Be sure then that you omit not the observance of this first *Rule*, in order to the well-governing your thoughts; for without this, all the rest will signify nothing.

II. Secondly, the next

rule is that you *avoid idleness*,¹ that hateful vice, which makes the soul of a man like *the field of the sluggard, all over-grown with thorns and briars*, Prov. xxiv. 30, 31, full of all manner of wanton desires, evil motions, and impure thoughts. When a man is idle and loitering, a thousand ill things come into his mind, which an honest industry would prevent; and the most desirable opportunity the Devil hath for injecting wicked thoughts or temptations successfully, is when a man hath nothing to do. It is absolutely necessary therefore that we avoid being idle; and so practise both parts of our Blessed Saviour's advice, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, Matt. xxvi. 41. Idleness is the nurse of wickedness, sin's procurer, a vice most odious in its

self, and leading into all others. It lays a man open to all assaults and temptations, and exposeth him to the dangerous solicitations of a legion of the Infernal Spirits at once. Whereas an industrious man puts Satan to the toil of a long siege, as it were, the negligent and idle person makes a present and voluntary surrender of himself to him. Thus much is signified by that parable of our Blessed Lord's (Matt. xii. 43). *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return into my house, from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* It is not so easy to root up filthy weeds that have once taken

¹ A good rule is to be diligent in that calling wherein Providence has called us. St. Jerome says, "Semper facito aliquid operis ut diabolus semper te inveniat occupatum."

root in any ground, as it is to prevent their being sown. Neither is it so easy to eradicate wicked thoughts, as it is to prevent them. Upon which account it is very necessary that we avoid the sin of idleness, which is a soil barren in every thing, but the noisome weeds of evil thoughts, and unclean imaginations. It was for want of better employment that *David's* heart was polluted with impure thoughts, and wanton desires of *Bathsheba*; which cost him so much woe, such sorrowful cries, and bitter lamentations; and caused that remarkable tragedy of *Uriah*, which we find 2 *Sam.* xii. 9, 10, &c. A sluggard is not only infamous among men, but God and angels look on him as an useless and unprofitable wretch. He seems as if he were heterogeneous to the whole creation; every part of which (that ought) is active and in motion; the sun, moon, and stars, in their rapid course, and all the moving

heavens, declare the glory of God, and even the firmament sheweth His handy-work. *Psa.* xix. 1. They are all useful, and answer the end of their beings, even things that are immovable; but the idle and slothful person doth not answer the end of his being, but is continually upbraided by them. And while almost every being is busy, and in action, he alone lies stretched along the ground, and sleeping away his golden days; or else tugging under the weight of studying and contriving how to spend them. When I see the picture of *Atlas*, with every muscle extended, and labouring under the ponderous globe of heaven upon his shoulders, I cannot forbear to think upon an idle person, whose greatest burden is time, and succeeding hours, days, and years, are a continuation of his slavery; or else I represent him to myself, as a man encompassed with a crowd of devils, who make him the

sport and pastime of all their accursed assaults and temptations, and do with him as they please. It is certain that there is no man safe that is idle ; he is not only exposed to every evil thought, but to the worst actions ; and he had better be in the midst of a battle, surrounded with his enemies, than to be so extravagantly at leisure, and unemployed.

III. Thirdly, *That which administers to evil thoughts as much as any thing, is bad company.* As it is the great advantage of good conversation to prompt men to virtue, to ennoble their minds, and to excite in them a pious and laudable emulation, so is it the great mischief of bad company, and wicked society, to infect and debauch the mind, and pollute the thoughts. Experience infallibly teacheth us, that when we hear any lewd or profane discourse, or see any base or indecent actions, we are too apt to repeat the evil in our thoughts ; and it is well

if it proceed no further. The holy Apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 33, *That evil communications corrupt good manners.* Vice is strangely recommended, and insensibly insinuates itself, in wicked conversation. And the same Apostle exhorts, *Eph. iv. 29, Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* Religious conversation, good discourse, greatly enlivens the soul, raises the thoughts, and animates a man against the force and influence of bad examples. But ill company is a dangerous and bewitching thing, and strangely lessens our ideas of God and notions of virtue ; and tends to pollute and harden the heart. Who can use to be in such company, where the Holy Name of God is blasphemed, His Being questioned, and disputed against, His Ministers, His Word, His Law, re-

proached and abused; who can accustom himself to the society of these men, whose ungoverned tongues talk of nothing but lewdness and obscenity, whose words, actions, and whole behaviour is scandalous, and immoral, or vain, frothy, and foolish; without being tainted therewith, and retaining the ungrateful savour of their ungodly conversation? Human nature is too corrupt and prone to ill to come off unhurt. Nothing indeed so much conduceth to make the thoughts loose and wicked as bad company, which must therefore be diligently avoided, if we would preserve our minds pure, and govern our thoughts aright. Always therefore endeavour to keep such company as you may rise *by*, and not fall *with*; such as may advance you in holiness, enrich your soul with virtue, and not such as will debauch your thoughts, and instil naughty cogitations into *your minds*.

IV. Fourthly, As we must abhor vicious conversation, so we must *avoid the reading any lewd or wicked books*, which treat of any vile and base subjects, or are any way apt to instil evil thoughts or notions into us. There is hardly any thing more tends to debauch the mind than the reading wicked books; which is a sort of conversing, and as bad, or worse, as the former. If our inclination or business lie principally that way, there are abundant gratifications of that kind, besides plays and romances, which are less dangerous, and more improving. And those that understand the rules of *education* will tell you, that few persons are competent readers of them, or ought to be allowed the liberty of meddling with them. The advocates of the theatre plead, that abundance of good morality, and virtuous instruction, may be got by seeing, or reading a play, or a romance. But

our own experience doth evidently confute that plea, and demonstrate, that the minds of many have been debauched by them, and no doubt many souls ruined, but few or none the better for them, in any particular. They are most contrary to the *Christian* profession, and the main scope and design of them, is visibly such, as most tends to please the fancies of lewd, or atheistical men; and instead of discouraging, recommending vice to the utmost advantage; and improving all kinds of evil thoughts, as much as any thing that can be mentioned.²

No man can be at a loss in this learned age, for select entertainments of his mind in reading. The pious strains of a lewd or atheistical poet, are not forced upon us by necessity, or a scarcity of wit; but upon inquiry, I believe it will, at least generally, be found, that

the most lovely and charming style, the most lofty and affecting language, goes along with the most useful and beneficial subjects.

The Book of *God*, the Holy Scriptures, affords greater variety of elegance, delight, and advantage, than all the writings in the world. And there is no man that rightly understands the Scriptures, but must esteem it a most blessed and perfective thing, *To delight in the law of the Lord, and in that law to exercise himself day and night*, Psa. i. What sublime and lofty theorems! What useful things, and absolutely necessary to the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls, do we meet with in the Sacred Volume! *There* we are entertained with the history of the *creation* of man, and the beginning of this visible world. *There* we are informed of the methods and dispensations of the Almighty towards mankind; and by what steps, and advan-

² It should be remembered that when Chilcot wrote the stage was particularly licentious.

ces His *Church* through all ages, grew to be what it is now. *There* God hath been pleased more clearly to reveal Himself, than anywhere besides. *There* we have the great mystery of Divine Love, in the *Redemption* of the world by *Christ Jesus*, our Lord, made known to us. The excellencies of *piety* and *virtue* described in the most affecting language. The truest perfection, and the extremest misery of man explained. Rules for obtaining eternal life and blessedness laid down, and most gracious promises, and unspeakable rewards, to encourage us in our endeavours after it. All which things, *even the angels desire to look into*, and admire the Divine Goodness, which impregnates all. And if we would but make this Word of *God* our study, and be diligently conversant in reading the Scriptures, we should more and more be sensible, that there is no *book like this*; and that

an excellent expedient to keep wicked thoughts out of our hearts, would be to read the Scriptures much and often, with meekness, prayer, and attention, instead of those vain, foolish, and unprofitable, or else profane, wicked, or obscene writings of such as call themselves the *wits* of the age.

The mind of man is combustible; the thoughts of his heart are mere tinder to the sparks of an obscene saying, a lewd fancy, or but so much as an impure hint; and therefore I am apt to think that few men in the world (how strong soever their prejudices may be, or how much soever they may presume upon their own strength) are able to govern their thoughts well, without they have a special regard to this rule, and admonition also.

V. Another rule, which is proper for the well-governing of our thoughts in general, is, *frequent self-examination*. Without often looking into our-

selves, and examining our own propensions and inclinations, and what is that *sin which doth so easily beset us*, it is hardly to be imagined how we should be able to govern our thoughts aright. There is nothing which a man is more a stranger to than *himself*, though there is nothing in which he ought to be more skilled; and that is one great reason of the irregularity of his thoughts. For without we well consult our own temper and constitution, and what the *lædientia* and *juvantia* are, and narrowly observe the tendency of our passions, and the frame and disposition of our souls, we cannot conquer our thoughts. It is impossible, unless we *know* ourselves, that we should *govern* ourselves. Sometimes a man's evil thoughts may run chiefly upon lust, and uncleanness; and sometimes covetousness may be his darling sin. Sometimes ambition may be his dotage; and at other times

revenge his favourite. Now how can it be imagined that a person can govern and subdue his thoughts, as to any of these, without a frequent inquiring into his own soul, and accurate knowledge of himself? Nay, which way can a man be convinced, and persuaded of the great evil and sinfulness of wicked thoughts, without *self-examination*? How can he be made truly sensible of their pernicious and polluting nature, and that they are so highly displeasing to God, as they are, without a diligent search into himself? Or how can he be possessed that it is his duty to restrain, and exercise a government over his thoughts, and that much is in his own power, in order to it! I say, how can a person be rightly sensible of any of these *necessary* things, without he frequently and skilfully practise this duty of *self-examination*? Which as it is of absolute use in order to religion in general, so it is to this

part of it especially, (*viz.*) the well-governing our thoughts. Besides,

How many men are too apt to imagine that as for thoughts, they shall never be laid to our charge, so long as they do not break out into actions ! That the theory of sin shall pass without the least notice of the Almighty Judge ; and that only the practice of it shall be observed, and censured. That as for thoughts, they are either in the nature of these *δδύματα*, impossibilities, which cannot be brought under any good order or government in regard of their infiniteness and variety ; and so they claim a privilege of invincible *liberty*, because they can not be subdued ; or else that they are such slight and small escapes, as that they carry their passport and pardon with them ; that they shall never be punished, and that therefore they are no sins ; and that also because the law of man takes no hold of *them*, and because like-

wise it is impossible altogether to avoid these thoughts, as was said before. Certainly (say they) we shall never be called to account for our thoughts, because they come oftentimes so suddenly, and unexpectedly, that no reason can be given of them ; and they do nobody any hurt ; what evil therefore should there be in them ? Why should we be accountable for them ? This is indeed the common strain of the civil, honest, moral man (as he calls himself) and the formal hypocrite, to draw *near unto God with his lips*, when his heart is far from Him ; to be under no concern for his thoughts, but only to take care with the *harlot*, to wipe his mouth clean ; and with *Pontius Pilate*, to wash his hands ; and with the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* to cleanse only the *outside of the cup, or platter*. This is all the religion of too many, who make it to consist in *sense*, and not in the *heart*, as if the design of it were to be

not the *reformation* of the *inward*, but an *accomplishment* of the *outward* man. As if indeed *Christianity* were no more than a mere *compliment*. And now what is the true cause of this? What is the reason of such dangerous errors and mistakes about our thoughts, as that they are free, sinless, and unpunishable? I say, what is the cause of all this, but ignorance of our own selves, ignorance of the sad and prevailing *corruptions* of our nature, and their greedy propensities and inclinations to evil: and ignorance of the Law of God too, which if we would look into, it would plainly shew us the detestable sinfulness of thoughts, and that the main end of *religion* is an internal change and purification of the heart and soul, of all the thoughts and imaginations? And now an excellent means to dispel this ignorance, is this rule which I am pressing you to the observance of (*viz.*)

Self-Examination; without which it will be an impossible thing to attain a right government of our thoughts in general.

VI.³ This rule must also be followed with another, if we would govern our thoughts aright; and that is that you *make a covenant with your eyes, and other senses*; keeping

³ On this rule the reader may find some admirable though somewhat quaint remarks in Tullie on the "Government of the Thoughts," p. 146 (Lond. 1694); and also in Part II. Section VIII. of "The Method and Means to a True Spiritual Life: consisting of Three Parts agreeable to the Ancient Way, by the late Revd. Matthew Scrivener, Lond. 1688;" one of the soundest and most beautiful books I have ever met with. I must quote one passage from Scrivener: "Nature (as Lactantius observes), to preserve the eye (a very tender and precious part), hath fenced it with hairs on the lids, as so many speares, which, at the approach of the least enemy to it, being but lightly touched, give notice to shut it presently, for its securitye. But it hath not provided such means to defend the eye from morall objects, which are ever in readiness to offend it: but that is the speciall gift of God, and should be the Christian prudence of every true believer." The passage from Lactantius will be found "De Opificio Dei," cap. 10 (p. 812, ed. Sparke, Oxon. 1684).

them from carnal or unlawful objects, or not letting them dwell upon them. This will be a very proper means in order to that great end, which is the scope of this treatise.

There is no preserving a castle or fortress from being taken by the enemy, but by having a special care of the avenues and breaches. Now the senses are, as it were, the *avenues* of the soul, the inlets of all evil into the mind; and therefore there is a necessity that we keep a strict watch over our senses, if we would have our thoughts pure and unpolluted. For there is not a sense that we have, but may betray and ruin us. An eye, a hand, &c., may prove our utter destruction: as that advice of our Blessed Lord implies: *Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt and maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be*

cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out, and cast it from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire. Matt. xviii.

8. Our own eyes may ruin us, as sure as those of a *basilisk*; and it is *our own eye* which puts witchcraft into that of others, and conveys back certain hurt and mischief into our thoughts and souls. There are a great variety of ensnaring objects in the world, that present themselves to us. The *world*, the *flesh*, and the *Devil*, conspire how to entrap us. Which way soever we turn, we find some object or other to entice us. As the *hermit* saw in his vision, the whole world is hung all over with nets. The *Devil* well knows that the best way to subdue the *spirit*, is by the *flesh*; and that there is no such effectual way of conquering the soul, as by first making his attacks upon the

outworks, the *senses* : and therefore he first endeavours to take *them*. It is of absolute necessity therefore that we keep a close guard upon every one of our *senses*, if we would not be invaded by wicked thoughts, for any one of them left unguarded, may prove our ruin. And we must acknowledge that it is giving too great a liberty to our *senses*, which is the occasion of so many vile and wicked thoughts filling our minds.

VII. Again : In the next place, we are to take care, that if any evil thoughts (of what kind soever they be) arise up in our hearts, *not to let them remain in us*; but presently to make resistance against them ; turning the heart immediately to a contrary subject ; humbling our souls by speedy repentance for the same. Let not *vain thoughts lodge in us*, Jer. iv. 14, though they may *glance upon us*.⁴ It is

dwelling upon a wicked thought that makes it prevailing, and domineering over us. If we habitually indulge it, it will get ground of us, and at length grow obstinate and unruly, and much more difficult to be conquered. Whereas an immediate resistance of it would by degrees so weaken it, as it is probable we should at length be quite rid of it. Though this may be thought a very *troublesome*, yet it is as *likely* a way as any, of avoiding evil thoughts. When any wicked imagination therefore presents itself, the best way to repel it would not be to argue and dispute long with it, but to catch away our minds from it presently, and, like a man that accidentally treads upon an *adder*, start back immediately, and strive to make no more approaches to it again. It is possible, nay

our sacrifice, as that of Abraham, we should scare them away incontinently."—*The Christian's Guide*, p. 10 (edit. 1683).

⁴ "If a flock of birds, of vain and light thoughts, come to soil

likely, that it will return upon you often in a little time : but do you labour, as often as it doth so, to thrust it out, and be not weary of so doing. And because this is not so easy a matter neither, (though this or nothing must be granted to be in our power) it would be expedient, in order to the diverting our minds effectually that we propose to our minds some one or other of the most awful subjects ; and such as is apt more than ordinarily to take up, and fix our thoughts. As for instance, the *Crucifixion* of our Saviour *Christ*. Imagining that we saw His *tortured* body bleeding upon the Cross ; and heard the *doleful* cries which He uttered, when He made the great Atonement and Satisfaction for the sins of the world ; and beheld the *portentous* eclipse, the *præternatural* darkness, the *rending* of the rocks, the opening of the graves, and the rest of the *tremendous* circumstances which attended

the death of the *Son of God*. Or else, let it be the last *Judgment*, and the miscellaneous horror and exaltation of that dreadful day, *wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the sun be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood ; the powers of heaven be shaken, and the stars fall from their orbs*, 2 Pet. iii. 12, Acts ii. 20, Mat. xxiv. 29, all this visible world be consumed and engulfed in an inconceivable eternity of happiness to the righteous, but of torment to the wicked. Any one of such subjects as these would be very proper to fix our minds upon, in order to keep them from returning to ill things. There is nothing can more awe the soul, collect the thoughts, and compose the spirits, than thinking on such subjects. They are things so very considerable, that while we are employing our minds about them, it is an hard

matter to think of anything else, or soon to be drawn aside to any other object. And therefore it is very advisable, that we make use of this expedient, in order to the well-governing our thoughts. To which end also,

VIII. Let us *be careful to watch over our thoughts on the Lord's-Day*; then more especially than at other times. The Lord's-Day is (I know not by what means) extremely slighted, and disregarded; and under a pretence of Christian liberty, profaneness hath very greatly advanced itself; so that God's own Day is become almost as one of ours, and but a very small difference observed between them. Men are generally so far from being most careful of their thoughts on that Holy-Day, that they suffer them to be most profuse and extravagant then; and not only their thoughts, but their actions too are for a great part worse than at other times. Which, as it is a very great sin in

itself, and such as shall be severely accounted for, so it is a great means of making our thoughts loose, ungovernable, and wicked at other times. For that, as it is a day peculiarly to be dedicated to God, so it is a day wherein God designs in a more eminent manner to communicate Himself, and His Grace, to our souls. And therefore if we do sanctify it as we ought, by having a strict watch over our thoughts, and by the delightful exercises of prayer, praises, and meditations, and a devout reading, and hearing the word of God, &c. it will (by God's blessing) leave such an happy tincture on us, and so piously, and lastingly incline the mind to good, that it will be an excellent means to order our thoughts the better, when we have more liberty for the world. How inconsiderable soever this rule may seem to any, yet I doubt not but a great part of the vanity and evil of our thoughts and imagi-

nations is owing to a careless, and remiss, observation of the Lord's-Day. Neither can I think, that that glorious promise (any more than the morality of the Fourth Commandment) is stinted to the Jewish economy alone, though it may primarily concern that (*Isa. lviii. 13, 14*). *If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My Holy-Day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable, and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

IX. Being watchful over ourselves when we are alone, is another rule which we are to observe in order to the well-govern-

ing of our thoughts in general. Solitude is a season when our thoughts are very apt to rove, and then to light upon ill objects.⁵ When a man is by himself, he is not secure from his spiritual enemies; and with respect to the multitude of vain, and evil thoughts, that then are apt to come into his mind, it may be truly said of him, *Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus*. Upon which account it was that the Devil chose that opportunity, to tempt our Saviour, when He was in the wilderness, alone. *Matt. iv.* Because he well knew that at such a

⁵ "When I am assailed with heavy tribulations, I rush out among my pigs, rather than remain alone by myself. The human heart is like a millstone in a mill; when you put wheat under it, it turns and grinds and bruises the wheat to flour; if you put no wheat, it still grinds on, but then 'tis itself it grinds and wears away. So the human heart, unless it be occupied with some employment, leaves space for the devil, who wriggles himself in, and brings with him a whole host of evil thoughts, temptations, and tribulations, which grind out the heart."—*Luther's Table Talk*, p. 275, ed. Hazlitt.

time as that, the mind of man being at leisure, his thoughts will be more relaxed and wandering, and so more easy to be won by his suggestions and to comply with his temptations. A monastic life doth not secure a man from evil thoughts, but in some sort makes him the more obnoxious to them. The Devil will pay his unwelcome visits to us in our privacy, as well as in conversation; and the hermit in his cell hath as much reason to look well to his thoughts, as he that is in the crowd of this world. And therefore I take it to be very advisable, that at any time, when we are alone, we suffer not our thoughts to scatter and fly at random; for unhappy conjunctions oftentimes prove the consequence of such erratical motions; but to confine them to some *certain* bounds, and *determinate* subjects, such as the Power or Goodness of Almighty God, or the like, which will sweetly employ

our thoughts, and refresh our minds. And the more profitably to think on any such subject, we may when we are alone likewise think on our own sinfulness, be judging ourselves, confessing our sins, and laying open our hearts before God, which will make the Goodness of God more illustrious, and admirable, and also keep us from being assaulted with any dreadful and terrifying thoughts, with any filthy and profligate thoughts, and our hearts from being deadened and stupified with mopishness, and drowsiness, &c. which at such a time we are more especially prone to.

Again: In the next place, let us *be very careful to entertain the good motions of God's Holy Spirit, to obey His heavenly Inspirations, to bow to His Sacred Suggestions, when at any time we are blessed therewith.* Every good thought should be *made welcome*, and *cherished*, and improved by us; and by that means

we shall not only avoid evil thoughts, but in time arrive at an happy temper and habit of good thoughts, which is one of the most desirable things in the world, and most of all prepares the soul for the purity and ravishment of the contemplation of God, and the joys of Heaven. Let us therefore always improve every good thought or motion that comes into our minds, and entertain it as an embassy from God, as a spark of the *Celestial Fire*. And let us diligently attend, and listen to the counsels and monitions of our own consciences; by no means resist their checks, or stifle their advertisements. To draw to a conclusion of this chapter. If we would attain to this great thing, (*viz.*) the due government of our thoughts, let us *be careful to preserve ourselves innocent and harmless; to do no hurt, or evil at any time, willingly. Let us make religion, and the fear of God our business. Let us make use of*

God's wonderful works, both of mercy and judgment, which at any time occur in the world, seasoning our hearts with an holy meditation of them.

There are a great many more excellent rules, in order to the well-governing our thoughts: As *applying ourselves to our proper teachers, and spiritual guides, for comfort and assistance, when our hearts are oppressed with wicked thoughts, or prevailing corruptions; avoiding unwarrantable curiosities, and prying into hidden mysteries, and unnecessary speculations; contentment; temperance; humility; trust and affiance in God; and abundance more, which are in that large field of discourse, which such a subject as this affords, and which, if I should enlarge upon, as I have done on the former heads, would swell this treatise into a much bigger book than I designed it.*

I shall therefore content myself and the reader with

these principal rules and directions, for the well-governing of the thoughts in general, which have been treated of in the foregoing pages; which well put in practice, will, I doubt not (by the blessing of Almighty God), prove in a great measure effectual to the end designed; and that, if we (not slightly and indifferently, but) closely, and in earnest, apply ourselves to them, we shall thereby prevent evil thoughts, and attain that happy and desirable government over ourselves, which either sloth, or ignorance, makes some men think to be *Utopian* and impossible; only adding this one particular more, which must by no means be passed over, and that is,

*XI. The deep and serious consideration of the last dreadful judgment.*⁶

⁶ "Ait quidam senex, 'Sicut apponitur amaritudo uberi ut puer ab eo separetur, ita delectationi cogitationis apponenda est amaritudo quæ eas amaras et insipidas reddat. Ad hoc autem præcipuè valet triplex amara memoria. Prima est *memoria mortis*, Ec-

Consider seriously with yourselves then, That there is a Day a coming, when not only all the actions, and more known passages of our lives, but even our most private and retired thoughts, shall be accounted for, when God shall judge the secrets of men by *Christ Jesus*. Though men cannot see our thoughts yet an All-knowing God can, and doth, and will assuredly judge us for them, in that Day, when those that have laboured to approve themselves unto God, by an internal purity,

clus. xll. O mors quàm amara est memoria tua,' &c. Secunda est *memoria Divinæ severitatis* contra peccatores, quæ maximè apparebit in *judicio* et in poenis reproborum, Soph. (Zephaniah) i. Vox dei Domini amara, &c. Tertia est *memoria Dominicæ Passionis*, Thren. iii. Recordare paupertatis et transgressionis meæ, absinthii et fellis. His itaque repelli possunt cogitationes malæ." —*Gemma Prædicantium*, fol. xciii.

This was a favourite rule with ancient writers, and the author of the "*Gemma*" seems to have copied it verbatim from the famous "*Opus Quadragesimale*" of Robert de Licio (Caraccioli) so frequently printed in the fifteenth century.

and sincere obedience, not regarding the eye of the world, or the silly applauses of mortal men, but the favour of God, and conscience of their duty, shall be crowned with eternal honours, and all their secret piety be rewarded openly; and those that have hypocritically carried a fair outside, and passed for civil, honest, moral men, whilst *their inward parts were very wickedness*, and their hearts full of all uncleanness, shall be laid open, and exposed to the shame of all the world, and they

banished from the presence of God, into the flames of hell for ever.

*Man indeed judgeth of the heart by the works; but God judgeth of the works by the heart.*⁷ Since therefore we must be called to an account for our thoughts hereafter, let us carefully remember it, and so reckon with ourselves for them in this, that we may not be judged for them in the world to come.

⁷ "Homo videt in facie, Deus autem in corde. Homo considerat actus, Deus verò pensat intentiones."—*Thomas à Kempis*, lib. ii. cap. 6.

CHAPTER V

Profane and blasphemous thoughts

THE accursed tempter and enemy of our souls is no doubt always busy in suggesting ill things to us, and casting into our minds wicked thoughts. He is continually pursuing us into all places and companies,

and presenting before us alluring and enticing objects. He is too well experienced in this black art; too skilful an engineer in laying his train. He very well knows the tempers and constitutions of mankind; is acquainted

with their *predominant* inclinations and propensities, and so can suit his objects, and proportionate his devices. His name is legion too; for there are a multitude of them to carry on the hellish designs, in ruining souls, and corrupting minds. Like the plagues of Egypt, they even fill the atmosphere. Their numbers are like those of the locusts, flies and lice, and frogs, croaking even in king's chambers. And could we but see these swarms of devils that assault us, and are darting their temptations at us, and continually injecting evil thoughts into our hearts, we should be astonished, and tremble at our danger; we should ever be crying to God to help us; and have a quick eye upon all their assaults. Could we but behold these infernal enemies that encompass us, our concern for ourselves could not be so small, as to suffer us to be careless and negligent. The devils are working, and contriving, and rest-

less in their motions to destroy our souls, and yet, alas! we are as secure as if we were embraced and caressed by our dearest friends; as if we had no enemy at all to fear. We have had some historical accounts of persons that have been such exquisite villains, in the art of poisoning, that they could convey the deadly venom to the vitals, and kill in a moment; or else bring on a lingering, but yet as certain death, and place the period of life some years off. As the *Javians*, and *Sumatrians*, by their poisoned crests (*a crest¹ is a dagger*) and the *Chineses* by their nails.

The woful experience of several of our own nation, as well as the common suffrage of all who have travelled into those parts, put the truth of this beyond the necessity of any particular authorities; though many such might be produced, were it not foreign to the present design.

¹ Creese

But the Devil is an artist more subtle even than these; he can convey a spiritual venom and contagion to the soul, and poison all the thoughts and powers of it. His injections are as quick and as keen as lightning; and he hath undiscernible ways of defiling and corrupting our minds. That Satan can throw wicked thoughts into our minds, is (I suppose) a matter not questioned; but whether he doth this by working on the humours of the body, or stirring up the animal spirits, or by an immediate applying his suggestions to the soul, is not so easy to be determined. There being a necessary dependence of the operations of the soul upon the texture of the body and spirits, it is not improbable that he frequently injects wicked thoughts that way. But why may he not also cast wicked thoughts into our hearts, by an immediate communication? The truth is, we cannot well

find out which method he takes in his temptations. We are not able to tell how he casts in wicked thoughts; we know little or nothing of the intercourse between beings purely spiritual. But too plain and true it is, that we are infested with a multitude of evil thoughts, and that they do proceed out of the heart, however they came there. And therefore it will be a more material inquiry how we shall be able effectually to resist or prevent them. And this cannot be fully done neither in a treatise of this nature; because their kinds are infinite, and their numbers endless. I shall therefore, according to my proposed method, consider in this chapter, some special kinds of evil thoughts, and endeavour to apply remedies against them, to the satisfaction and benefit, I hope, of the serious reader.

I. Then the first kind of them which I shall consider is, *Profane and blas-*

phemous thoughts. And of this sort there is a dismal variety. I have known some, and those I am persuaded very religious people, who have been extremely disturbed with such thoughts concerning God, as have been most unaccountable, and as absurd as they are profane.

If I thought fit, I could mention some of them which have been so extravagant, that I should think to be rid of them, it were better to contemn and despise them, than anxiously to be concerned about them; though with others of them we ought to deal after a different manner. To think aright of Almighty God, and to have such ideas of Him in our minds as are worthy and becoming so Great and so Pure a Majesty, is not only a very considerable part of religion, but a very comfortable thing. And I cannot but pity such Christians as are much afflicted with profane thoughts. Of this kind

of *evil thoughts*, there are some more hideous than others; but yet every thought of Him, which is contrary or unsuitable to that representation, which by such and such glorious attributes He hath made to us of Himself in His Holy Word, that I call a profane thought; or when we conceive of Almighty God under some gross form, or material shape; or entertain any vile, mean, or indeed any but the highest conceptions that we are able of Him. God is in Himself an Infinite, Almighty, and Incomprehensible Spirit; and though He hath sometimes in the Scriptures described, and represented Himself to us by material figures, or sensible objects, yet we are not to think that He is really such as He is described, but that He condescends to our capacity by such a style and language. And any other method of instructing us in the nature of Himself, would not be so intelligible to us. God

useth this as an easy and familiar way of teaching us to know Him ; without which our notions of Him would be very obscure, and we could know but little of Him. And therefore I cannot but wonder at the impudence and Luciferian pride of such men, who deny all mysteries, and pretend to know God so as *perfectly* to comprehend Him, by the dim light of natural reason alone.

Thus is God represented to us sometimes as having hands, feet, eyes, and such like organical parts. Not that He hath truly such, (as the old heretics, the *Anthropomorphites* held, and the *Romanists* now depict Him) but we are to understand them in a figurative sense. His hands and His feet, betoken His power ; His eyes, His knowledge and favour, &c. ; and therefore to think of Him under any material figure, is a profane thought, and must by no means be encouraged. So also to think

that God is a liar, or unmerciful, or unjust, &c., is a blasphemous thought. And indeed, (as I said) every thought that is formed in our minds, which is unsuitable to His eternity, authority, purity, and holiness, or any other of His glorious attributes, is reducible to this first kind of evil thoughts. Now though these are very dreadful thoughts, yet they may sometimes come into our minds through the Devil's subtlety, and our own carelessness. Nay, it is possible that they may infest the minds of good men, and that too when they are about the highest employments ; which may for the present serve to satisfy those poor souls, who are at any time terrified, and affrighted with a sense of them, and take off from that horror that they are apt to conceive in their minds upon the account of them.

Now the directions, which I would recommend in order to our avoiding any *profane and*

blasphemous thoughts, are these following.

First, That we be sure *to avoid an habit of any known sin*, than which there is nothing more ministers to profane and blasphemous thoughts. For an habit of any known sin will strangely degrade our thoughts, and lessen our *ideas* of God; it being an impossible thing for any man to arrive at an habit of wilful and deliberate sinning, without frequent grapplings with his own conscience, and iterated resistances of its checks and convictions, without thinking falsely or meanly of God, or else putting Him quite out of his thoughts, *and His Judgments far above out of his sight*. No wonder that by continuing so to do, he comes at last to have profane or blasphemous thoughts of Him.

God is an Infinite and Eternal Spirit, and the most absolute Being, and Transcendancy above the highest of our thoughts. And if ever we would

think rightly and worthily of Him, we must habituate ourselves to think much upon Him, and let our thoughts of Him be according to those representations and discoveries, which He hath been pleased to make of Himself in the Scriptures. Our natural reason, though it will yield us some knowledge of a God, yet it is not a sufficient guide to direct our thoughts concerning Him; for it will many times lead us into false notions of Him; as appears beyond all dispute from the worship of the *Gentile* world, and also the *heterodox* opinions of those who rely thereon. And how is it possible for any habitual sinner, who must, and doth, thrust God out of his thoughts on purpose that he may sin with the greater liberty and delight, ever to do this? He cannot grow to a habitual sinner, without he quite banisheth the thoughts of a God from His heart; and that such

an one should be able to think of Him after a due manner, what is it less than a contradiction? And then no wonder if by so frequently slighting God in his own mind, he comes at length to think profanely and blasphemously of Him; irreverent thoughts of God grow still more and more wicked; and a continual disrespect of Him ends at length in *atheism* itself. He then that is haunted, and pestered, with such thoughts as these we are speaking of, may perhaps, upon a deep inquiry, find cause to condemn himself of some habit of sin; and if so, he must labour to mortify it, and become a new man, if ever he would avoid this kind of evil thoughts.

II. Secondly, *Too curious and bold speculations, into matters mysterious, prove frequently an occasion of profane and blasphemous thoughts*; and therefore they must be carefully declined. He that hath an honest and

conscientious regard to his duty, as it is plainly set down, and humbly desires to know and serve God above all, is seldom so much troubled with this kind of thoughts, as those are, who aspire to things vastly above them, and place more of their duty in speculation, than in *practice*. When men will forsake the plain way, and wander into unbeaten paths, no wonder that they fall into mischief. When men will, instead of endeavouring to understand God's Commandments, and do His will, aspire to comprehend His Essence, His Decrees, &c., and find out the Almighty to perfection; when they will not be contented to know the *saving truths* of the Gospel, and practise their plain and legible duty, but nicely pry into the *secret things, which belong neither to us, nor our children*; when they will grasp at all, and think to understand all mysteries,

and all knowledge, and remove mountains; then they naturally, as well as justly, fall into profane imaginations, and blasphemous thoughts; and sometimes into errors, and damnable heresies. This is the true case of the present age, and the main occasion of these blasphemous opinions concerning the Blessed Trinity, which are now so daringly broached amongst us;² and indeed, it is that to which most of men's profane and enormous³ thoughts of God are owing. And since it is so, truly if they would avoid them, they must learn to be more modest and humble, and to have a more conscientious regard to their duty.

They must content themselves with those

² The close of the seventeenth and commencement of the following century swarmed with Deists and Socinian writers. It will suffice to name Toland, Chubb, Tindal, Collins, &c. The West of England, when Chilcot wrote, was the stronghold of Socinian doctrines.

³ We should now say "abnormal."

plain discoveries which God hath made of His Mind and Will, and labour to follow them; and adore His unsearchable Wisdom in the rest. An humble obedience will much more promote the eternal salvation of our souls, than such bold speculations; and the love of God is far better than all such impious and fruitless attempts to comprehend Him. For all such attempts will in the end confound, but never advantage the minds of men. These *Highflyers*, when they are in their altitudes, suddenly their waxen wings melt, and down they fall headlong, like *Lucifer*, from heaven. When we reverently submit our reason to divine revelation, and the conduct and guidance of the word of God; when we make that (with the *Psalmist*) *A lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths*, Psa. cxix. 105, then we are safe, as well as free, from these horrid thoughts we are speaking

of; at least they are not occasioned by ourselves, if they should chance to come into our minds. But, I say, when reason will be its own guide, and men will *walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks which themselves have kindled*, they must needs err, they must needs stumble, as in the dark; or, like a ship without ballast, be tossed up and down, and made the sport of every wind of doctrine. They will hereby be liable to the worst cogitations concerning the Infinite Being.

III. Thirdly, *A customary, formal, and indevout worshipping of God*, is that which at length usually grows into profane and blasphemous thoughts of Him; which therefore must diligently be avoided, if we desire to be without such thoughts. For if, in our most solemn address to Almighty God, we be not careful that our thoughts of Him be reverent and composed, our *conceptions* high and holy,

it is easy to imagine, that at other times we shall be apt to have mean and low, or profane thoughts of Him. And why may we not think that this is a too common occasion of profane and blasphemous thoughts? If I am not solicitous to form my heart aright, and bring my thoughts of the Great God into a due frame and temper of devotion, while I am worshipping Him, and in His more solemn and immediate Presence, it naturally leads me (as well as provokes God to leave me) to gross, profane, and impious thoughts of Him. When a man therefore is about to perform his duty of devotion to God, either in public or private, let him endeavour to fix in his heart such thoughts of Him, as may exceedingly awe and compose him, and not be indevout and formal in his addresses to Heaven; and I verily think this may be a very proper means to preserve him from profane or blasphem-

ousthoughts; which otherwise, it is reasonable to expect, will grow upon him.

IV. Fourthly, *Discontent, and a worldly anxiety, is that which (how far soever it may at first seem from it) very much conduceth to profane and blasphemous thoughts of God.* And there is a great deal in that expression of the Apostle, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* There are no persons more apt to arraign the wisdom and goodness of God, in the distributions of His providence, than such: to conceive not only indecent, angry, and false, but profane and blasphemous notions of Him; none more apt to follow the desperate advice of *Job's* wife, *Curse God, and die,* Job ii. 9, than such worldly, repining, discontented wretches as place all their Heaven here. And that this is true, I think is a matter sufficiently plain by our own experience; and it is easy to produce in-

stances not a few. And therefore to be *humble, contented,* and *blessing* God; not charging Him foolishly, or thinking of Him unworthily in every state and condition; I look upon to be part of the means in order to the avoiding profane and blasphemous thoughts.

V. Another rule which may be observed to this end, is, *That when at any time we are assaulted with such profane thoughts, we immediately with a sacred fear cast them out of our minds.* For profane or blasphemous thoughts are especially such as we should not stay to argue or dispute with. And therefore we find that though our Blessed Lord thought fit to argue with the Devil in other temptations, yet when he suggesteth profane thoughts of God to Him, our Saviour seems to vary in his defence, and immediately bids Him be gone, *Matt.* iv. 10. *Ὁραὲ Σατανᾶ, Ἔλθε ἔκθε* *Satan, &c.* And then (it

is said) *The Devil left Him, and behold Angels came and ministered unto Him*, ver 11.

Whenever therefore this happens to be your case, that you are troubled with such horrid, profane, or blasphemous, thoughts of God, immediately cast them out ; do not let your mind dwell upon them one moment ; but do with this kind of evil thoughts in particular, as you were taught to do in the Seventh Direction for the well-governing our thoughts in general.

In the next place, it is advisable, that at that time when we are assaulted with them, *we send up an ejaculation to Heaven, and lift up our hearts to God in a short prayer*, that He would be pleased to cleanse our hearts of them, and preserve us from them. When any such abominable thought presents itself to thee, cry out, *O Lord, keep me ! O Lord, save me ! O Lord, let not the Devil have advantage*

over me ! Lord, I desire to love, and adore, Thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my might. O Lord, Thou knowest that I am grieved at such thoughts as these ; and earnestly desire to have my thoughts of Thee to be such, as those blessed spirits entertain, who are continually in Thy blissful presence, &c. And not only in ejaculatory, but in our set prayers, and constant devotions, should we offer them up to God, purge and acquit ourselves of them in His sight, and lay open the sincere and vehement desires of our souls, to be rid of them. And by this means it is hoped that we shall at length be freed from them. Though they may not presently depart from us, but continue to molest us, even in our prayers, and most solemn duties, as they often will ; though Almighty God may suffer them to be injected into our mind, for wise and beneficial ends, which are unseen, as, no doubt, He

frequently doth; yet I think this is what very well becomes one that is afflicted with profane or blasphemous thoughts, and a proper way to ease his mind of them.

VII. Again: *In order to the remedying profane and blasphemous thoughts, have a special reverence of the Name of God.* Never hear It mentioned without a sacred veneration and awe upon thy soul. Let thy heart bow down at the mention of Him. Never let His Name be in thy mouth but with devotion; nor ever hear others pronounce It rashly or profanely, in common swearing, or cursing, without an holy dread, and (if it may be done effectually) a sober reproof. A customary and heedless naming the Name of God, leads to profaneness and encourageth blasphemous thoughts of Him.

And therefore it is a dangerous evil to have the Name of God, or Christ, in our mouths slightly or jestingly, or upon any frivolous occasion, or in the

repetition of a story, &c. The Apostle saith, *That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* All the heavenly host pay a most profound reverence to that Name, which men prostitute and make so vile. And until we endeavour to imitate their adorations, we shall not easily be preserved from such thoughts as are horridly profane. It is hard to imagine how that person can be kept from thinking unworthily of God, who makes nothing of using His Name in his common discourse, or upon the most petty occasions.

VIII. One rule more which I would recommend to the purpose in hand, is this: *Labour to know God, if thou wouldst think highly and worthily of Him.* The knowledge of God is a proper remedy against profane thoughts. Now there is a knowledge of God which we may not seek after, as to know His Essence, His Decrees,

Sec. To endeavour so to know Him, is a vain, as well as a presumptuous, thing; as was hinted before in this chapter. But there is a knowledge of God, which we may and ought to make our search and study, *viz.* the knowledge of His glorious Attributes, His Will, and Commandments; and those things that in His Word He hath revealed on purpose to be known, in order to man's present happiness, and future perfection. Such a knowledge of Him as this every good man will earnestly endeavour after, and use all means of attaining; and the rather because it is indeed an expedient of avoiding such profane thoughts of God as many are grievously troubled with. Ignorance is here so far from being the mother of devotion, that nothing more tends to make our thoughts of God vile, and blasphemous. The truth of this abundantly appears from the *various and monstrous*

idolatries of the Gentile world, and the gross and horrid conceptions they had of their deities; and also from the idolatries of the Church of *Rome*, and that gross and carnal way of worship amongst them used; especially in the darkest ages of Popery, when it is almost incredible to tell what absurdities and profanenesses were the consequences of their ignorance. Nay, it must be acknowledged that even amongst ourselves, *some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.* And until they have, until they do attain to know Him in some measure, it cannot be imagined that their thoughts of Him should be rectified. The more we know God, the more we come to love Him, to be transported with Him, and to have the most high and noble thoughts of Him.

Now this excellent, and useful, and desirable knowledge of God, is to be obtained these two ways:

I. By His Works,

And, II. By His Word.

First, From our own observation of the stupendous frame of the Creation, and the mighty acts of His Providence; the admirable order of all beings, their usefulness and subserviency to man; the establishment of kingdoms and empires; the preservation and government of His Church; both His Judgments and His Mercies, &c. These things, if seriously observed, and considered, are a great means to make us to know God, and consequently to excite in us high and holy thoughts of Him; and so to preserve us from all profane, or blasphemous, or unworthy thoughts of Him.

II. And as we may come to know God by our own attentive observation of the great works of His Creation and Providence, so we may by His most Holy Word. And indeed thence alone we can fetch our truest ideas, and most proper thoughts of God. The Scriptures are the

best helps to our attaining the knowledge of Him; wherein in a majestic style, His glorious Attributes are represented to us; His Goodness, Purity, Power, Justice, Truth, are wonderfully displayed in a various manner; by descriptions, historical relations, amazing acts, prophecies and predictions, precepts, and admonitions, and surprising revelations; which no man can consider as he ought, but he must needs be inspired with holy and awful thoughts of the Great God, and admirably preserved from all vain, wicked, or profane thoughts, which prove a great terror and affliction to many.

To draw to a conclusion of this chapter. *A careful and humble reading and hearing the Holy Word of God, together with a conscientious attendance upon His Sacraments and other ordinances,* is a very excellent way to be rid of all profane, or blasphemous, thoughts. For our hearts by this means are happily

seasoned with good things; and God's Holy Spirit conveyed to our souls, and lasting inclinations to holiness are apt to remain in us.

But because I would not leave these poor souls, who are apt to be disquieted, and terrified with such thoughts as these, without some further security, comfort, and satisfaction, in this matter,

Be pleased further to consider, that though it be our duty to hate and abhor, and tremble at the very first motion of such profane, impious, or blasphemous thoughts, yet we have no reason to be so terribly affrighted at them, or confounded with them, as many (and those good Christians) are. *For the All-wise God doth frequently suffer us to be tempted with such profane thoughts for ends excellent, and beneficial to our own immortal souls;* as to humble us, and make us more strict in the examination of our own hearts, more sensible of

the deceitfulness of them, which is in nothing more discernible, than in an extravagant liberty of thoughts.

Or else it may be to make us more sober in our understanding; to avoid nice inquiries into cases mysterious, and shun all enthusiastic expectations; or to rouse up the dull and decayed powers of our souls. Or it may be to try our faith, and other graces; and to see whether we will love Him, when He thinks fit to withhold His Divine and Spiritual Comforts from our souls, as well as when He bestows them upon us. Or else to cause us perhaps to make the Glory of God our highest end in all our performances, that our hearts run not upon any mean and low designs, but the pleasing the Almighty be, as it is, the end of our being. Or else it may be to stir us up to the greater diligence in making our calling and election sure; and not to let our eternal happiness

rest upon such uncertainties, as the generality of men do theirs, but strive to get as much assurance of our endless welfare as possibly we are able, and is consistent with faith, hope, and other Christian virtues. Thesethen being, doubtless, some of the gracious ends for which God is pleased to suffer us to labour under such thoughts as I have been speaking of, and it being oftentimes the case of good Christians to be afflicted with them, those poor souls, who happen at any time to be disquieted with them, have great reason to take courage, and to be comforted under them.

And let them be assured of this, *That that which is a man's burden, will not*

be reckoned as his sin, Matt. xi. 28. And that if they hate these thoughts more, because they are dishonourable to God, than because they are grievous and troublesome to themselves; and are by means of them made more watchful, circumspect, and devout, than they before were; then Satan shall answer for them, and not they; the Devil shall be judged for all those profane and blasphemous thoughts which they, dejected souls, were so much afflicted with the apprehension of as of their own.

And so I have despatched this first species of evil thoughts, *viz. Profane, and blasphemous thoughts.*

CHAPTER VI

Impure and unclean thoughts

THE next kind of evil thoughts, which deserves our distinct con-

sideration, is that of *Unclean Thoughts*. And there seems to be more

danger in these, than the former; because there is something in corrupt nature more agreeable to them, than to the other; and therefore it is apt more to be pleased with them. But to a good man, to a true Christian, these thoughts are no less disquieting and hateful, than the former; and therefore I shall endeavour to prescribe some proper remedies against them.

I. *The first of which is Prayer*; which though it must be acknowledged to be an universal remedy, and must in no case of trial be prætermitted, for if any man lack wisdom or grace (of any particular kind whatsoever) *let him ask it of God* (saith St. James) *Who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not*, James i. 5, yet I take it to be more especially needful here. And therefore we must be much in prayer. If we find ourselves to be assaulted with this kind of thoughts, we must make it a part of our constant

petitions, that God would be pleased to cleanse and purify *the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit*; that He would *mortify* our lustful desires, and quench the *fire* of concupiscence in us, that our souls and bodies may be the *temple* of God. We must imitate the poor *leper* in the Gospel, *Who fell down at Jesus's feet, and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!* Matt. viii. 2. It is no easy matter to subdue this kind of evil thoughts in some complexions; but the difficulty of so doing, is greatest to such as have lived in an habit of lust and uncleanness; and therefore we must call in the assistance of Heaven, by constant and devout prayer.

Secondly, *Temperance and fasting, are a proper remedy for the suppressing of this kind of evil thoughts*. While the soul and the body are so united, and make up one *composi-*

tum, the operations of the *soul* will be greatly inclined, and biassed by the complexion, and constitution of the *body*; and therefore *that* must be kept in due order and subjection.

A *pampering* and *indulging* the flesh, is a great promoter of lust; and when the animal spirits are intoxicated, the *soul* can but feebly exert itself. A man can hardly preserve himself *then* from the *grossest acts* of uncleanness, much less from impure *thoughts*. And therefore *temperance*, and *self-denial*, are *always* necessary, in order to avoiding unclean thoughts; which, as our Saviour said of the unclean *devil*, *go not out but by fasting and prayer*, Matt. xvii. 21.

The mind is *calm* and *serene* when the body is in a regular temper. A man is fit to meditate, and think on God and heaven, and holy things, when he is *sober* and *moderate*. And the reason of *fasting* being made a duty, is in

order to tame the insolencies of the flesh; to keep the thoughts pure, the reason clear, and to make us more *fit* for religious duties. Upon which account the duties of self-denial, and mortification, are not so *severe* as they may sometimes seem to us, but highly *reasonable*; since the denial of the gratifications of our *sensual* and *low* desires, doth bring satisfaction to the *higher* appetites of the soul; since while the *body* is kept in due subjection, the soul's liberty and activity is much the greater. And besides, *Heaven* is worth striving and denying ourselves for, if it were a work *much more* harsh and unpleasant than it is. If this will denominate us of the number of *Christ's* true disciples, certainly we should not stick at it; and that it will do so, our Blessed Lord hath assured us, *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me,*

Matt. xvi. 24. Men will restrain their appetites, and deny themselves in a great measure for some *temporal* and *worldly* ends; why should they not do it then to gain *eternal* happiness?

St. Paul tells us, That in the ancient *Grecian* Games, called the *Olympic* Games, those that were the strivers, or combatants for the prize, would be sure to mortify themselves, and keep to a *strict* and *sparing* diet, thereby to bring down their flesh, and make their bodies *pliant* and *athletic*; and all that they could hope to get by it, was only a garland of flowers, and a little *frivolous* honour. And therefore if they would be at the pains to do so much for a reward not worth naming, how much *more* should we do it in order to the avoiding unclean thoughts, and impure desires; which will not only *hinder* us in our striving for heaven, but *unqualify* us for it. Thus the *Apostle* argues, *Every one*

that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run not as uncertainly, so fight I not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away, 1 Cor. ix. 25, &c.

The Third Remedy against unclean thoughts is, the consideration that they are of a defiling nature. They leave a strange pollution and filth behind them; and, if indulged, very strongly incline to actual uncleanness. It is a dangerous thing to cherish thoughts of this kind, to delight in them, and dwell upon them.

For there are *none* more apt to grow usurping and ungovernable by entertainment than *these*. They do moreover mightily unfit us for holy duties. They weaken the powers

of the soul to a *great* degree; and therefore as we value our souls, as we esteem heaven, into which no *unclean thing shall enter*, let us labour to avoid them; and this consideration is proper in order thereunto.

Fourthly, *Keeping a strict guard over all our senses is here particularly necessary*. For it is by the senses that lust invades the soul; and therefore unless we have a special regard to them, we cannot preserve our souls from being polluted.

Our eyes therefore should be turned away from all forbidden objects; our ears be deaf to all obscene discourses; and the rest of our senses shun everything that may have the *least* tendency to this kind of evil thoughts. A vain curiosity to be a *spectator*, hath sometimes proved fatal, especially in *two* instances in the Scriptures, *Gen. xxxiv. 1, 2; 2 Sam. xi. 2.*¹ And one

¹ In the cases of Dinah and David.

unguarded sense hath ere now proved a man's destruction. Therefore if we will approve ourselves to God in *sincerity*, and are desirous to attain a right government of our thoughts, and avoid this kind of them especially, we must be sure to keep a strict watch over all our senses.

Fifthly, *An having recourse to the Blood of Jesus, is a great preservative against, and cure of, unclean thoughts*. This was the practice of a devout person, *Cum me pulsasset aliqua turpis cogitatio, statim recurro ad vulnera Christi, et sanabor; i.e. When I am assaulted by any impure thoughts, I have immediate recourse to the wounds of Christ, and I shall be healed*.

Therefore when any filthy imagination comes into thy heart, let thy mind presently divert from it, to *Christ Jesus* hanging on the cross. Imagine that thou sawest His Precious Blood streaming forth, and pray

to God that thy soul may be cleansed therein.

Especially fly to the *Bethesda* of His Blood in the Sacrament, for all the diseases of thy soul ; but this of unclean thoughts in particular.

The Sacrament is a *purifying* and strengthening ordinance, if we come to it rightly prepared ; and it is most commonly for want of a devout *preparation*, that we find not the happy effects of it. The Sacrament is our *Spiritual armour* against all the *darts of the Devil*, against all his impure suggestions and temptations. And if we come to it with a truly penitent, sincere, and humble heart, though this kind of wicked thoughts, or any other, should infest us even while we are at the *Lord's Table*, yet our Merciful and Gracious God will accept our sincere, though mean, endeavours ; and at length grant us that purity which we are so *sensible* we want, and so *earnestly* pray for ; that we may be able to

serve Him *without* distraction, and worship Him with our *whole* souls, and *unmixed* affections.

VI. Another *Remedy against impure thoughts, and lustful imaginations*, which I shall recommend to you, is, *the serious consideration of the purity of God*. The Almighty is a God of infinite Purity and Holiness. He hates all uncleanness, and cannot look upon the least sin, or pollution, *even of our thoughts*, with approbation. And it will be a means of avoiding such unclean thoughts, to have this consideration frequently in our minds, (*viz.*) That God is infinitely Pure and Holy, and hates all kinds and degrees of filthiness and uncleanness. This questionless was that which made good *Joseph* resist the solicitations of his wanton mistress with *How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. The Lord will dwell in a clean habitation, or none. And if even the *wicked spirits*

will have *their house swept and garnished*, before they will enter in, surely God will not dwell in a worse than they, *Matt. xii. 44.*

To the *pure heart alone* He makes discoveries and communications of Himself. To the *clean soul* He affords His Grace and comforts. *These alone* He blesseth with His Presence *here*, and admits into His beatific Presence *hereafter*. *These only* can enjoy God; for *these alone* are *qualified* to enjoy Him. *Hell* is the stinking lake of all uncleanness, where impure spirits and ugly fiends wallow in the steam of their horrid pollutions. But *Heaven* is the habitation of pure, chaste, and *virgin* souls; the region of innocence; the kingdom of the *Lamb*; *where there is no manner of thing that defileth*. And he that hopes to come thither, and to dwell with God everlastingly, *he* (I

say) *that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as He is pure*, 1 John iii. 3. *Who* (saith the Psalmist) *shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His Holy Place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, and hath not lift up his mind unto vanity*, Psal. xxiv. 4. And to this *internal* purity of the *soul and thoughts*, is that *glorious* beatitude of the vision of God annexed: *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*, *Matt. v. 8.*

Now besides these, there are several other rules to be observed, for the avoiding this kind of evil thoughts; which cannot conveniently be enlarged on in this treatise; as the *shunning idleness, and vain and lascivious conversation, loose sports, and theatrical shows &c.* which I leave to your own care and observation to discover.

CHAPTER VII

Malicious and uncharitable thoughts

REVENGEFUL and malicious, or uncharitable, thoughts, are another kind of evil thoughts, which deserve our distinct consideration. For they do many times domineer and tyrannize in the souls of men, to the effectual hindrance of their duty. Whatever favourable opinion men may have of, or whatever excuses they may pretend for, them, it is undeniable that the *Christian* religion makes it our duty to be kind and charitable, loving and forgiving, to all the world, even our worst enemies. *But* (speaks our Lord) *I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, Matt. v. 44. And (Matt. v. 21.) Ye have heard that it was said*

by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother Raca, (i.e. Thou empty, or despicable fellow, or the like) shall be in danger of the council: But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire. From which it is plain, That the *Christian* law doth forbid all malice and revenge; not only actually doing hurt to any, but all contumelious language, and cherishing even the least revengeful thought.

But yet how apt is human nature to retain the memory of a supposed injury! How prone is a man to have a grudge in

his heart against his brother! Perhaps he will carry a fair show of charity; but yet his conscience tells him there lurks rancour, or at least a *grudging* in his heart; and it is a difficult matter to bring him into a better mind. But he must be of a better mind, if he will be a *Christian indeed*; and he must not only *forgive* an enemy, but *forget* him too.

This (as is very probable) hath been the *true* cause of keeping many persons from the *Lord's Table*; who rather than they will lay aside some little *punctilio* or other, and be *clothed with that humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5, which becometh *Christians*, in order to a reconciliation, they will obstinately deprive their souls of that inestimable benefit. This now being diametrically opposite to the spirit of *Christianity*, I shall lay down rules for the suppressing this kind of *evil thoughts*. And they are *briefly* these following.

I. *The consideration of*

what Christ Jesus our Master, (Who hath forbidden all uncharitable thoughts) hath done for us.

How can any one think of revenge, who hath received such favours, and immunities (as every *Christian* hath) at the hands of his Redeemer? How unlike a *Christian* is it to cherish so much as an envious *desire*! How different from the mind of *Christ*, and the charity of a forgiving *Jesus*, Who hath done and suffered more for us (*His enemies*) than it is possible to express! Truly therefore, to consider this *seriously*, is a sufficient check to all such thoughts as these; and a proper means to eject them. It is an hard matter for a man to be so profligate, as to take pleasure in the misfortunes or lapses of others, who considers how much he himself is indebted to the *Goodness* of God. To *devise* a revenge, or calumny, upon his bed against

any person ; to seek occasions to discover a *mote in his brother's eye* ; to proclaim his errors, as upon the housetop, and to represent his mistakes to be his vices ; to slander, backbite, and defame his neighbour ; and to support his own reputation, or estate, on the ruin of another's ; when any of these things are the *business* of any man's thoughts, he is so far from being a true disciple of our *Lord Jesus*, that he is *in the very gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*.

Besides the great uneasiness that such thoughts are to the mind that harbours them, and the effectual hindrance that they are to holy duties, they carry in them a very great *dissimilitude* to the temper of the Meek, the Kind, and the Charitable *Jesus*, shewn to *ourselves*. Which to one that makes conscience of his profession, is a very heinous and detestable thing. Behold thy Saviour hanging upon His Cross, and praying

for thee, and the rest of His murderers ; and, I should think, that *sight* would quickly banish all revengeful, grudging, or uncharitable thoughts out of thy mind ; and make thee more easy and pleasant to thyself, and more fitted for thy duty.

II. *The consideration of what our own demerit is, and what indignities and affronts our sins have been to God, is another expedient for the avoiding this kind of evil thoughts.*

Fear, or some temporal consideration, may keep a man from executing his revenge ; but in order to preserve himself from wicked, uncharitable, thoughts, which are hateful in the sight of God, and highly punishable, the consideration of our own demerit is a proper expedient.

And here we cannot but fall down in adoration of the forbearance, and longanimity of a provoked *God*, towards us miserable offenders. We cannot but with the deepest con-

viction acknowledge that we have offended God infinitely more, than any have offended us. The dignity of His Person, is a transcendent aggravation of every sin, be it what it will. And this is a very persuasive motive for us to overlook all injuries and affronts; which how great soever they may be in themselves, are yet *comparatively* petty and inconsiderable ones. It is a piece of great presumption for any person, to have *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*, in his mouth, while he harbours envious, malicious or uncharitable thoughts in his heart. And whosoever duly considers himself, and what a sinful, unworthy creature he is, [and he would do well here to call to mind some of his greatest sins] will not easily cherish any rancorous or invidious thoughts long; nay, not *suffer the sun to go down upon his wrath*.

III. It may cool our in-

censed or uncharitable thoughts, if, when they are apt to arise in our heart, *we consider on that perfect love, union, and sincere affection, that there is among all the blessed saints and angels in heaven; and that if ever we would come to heaven, we must be like them*. One heart, and one soul, animates all the inhabitants of glory. There is not the least opposition or variation in their desires, or affections. Every one of the blessed is unspeakably dear to all the rest. *God is love*, (St. John tells us, 1 Epist. Chap. iv. 8.) and His radiant Likeness is stamped upon every glorified soul, which makes it surpassingly fair and beautiful. Love! it is the epitome of happiness! And as it is the cement of *this* creation, which keeps all the parts of it in an harmonious order, so it is the glory and beauty of heaven. And whosoever he be that retains the least grudge, or uncharitable suspicion,

or revengeful thought, is unfit to live among those affectionate spirits, and to receive the transporting illapses of the Divine and Infinite Love.

Which consideration should effectually banish every malicious or uncharitable thought out of our hearts. And indeed this kind of evil thoughts is such, as we must by no means esteem slight and inconsiderable. They often produce very sad effects, when encouraged; they run men into horrible extremes. Besides that, they greatly hinder us in doing our duty acceptably; and are so displeasing to God, that they render all pretences to religion vain, and insignificant; and blast the best of our sacri-

fices, and the choicest *gift that we bring to the Altar*, Matt. v. 23.

And therefore we cannot but think ourselves obliged to mortify and subdue them; and never suffer ourselves to be at rest, until we find in us a *real and universal* reconciliation, and an *undissembled* love and charity, to all the world. In order to which, there are some other rules to be observed; as *divesting ourselves of an immoderate self-love*, which is apt to stick to most men; *avoiding pride, and partiality; constant prayer, &c.* But I hope these that I have mentioned, may put you upon inquiring after the rest.

CHAPTER VIII

*Wandering thoughts*¹

THERE is hardly anything that is a greater occasion of affliction to us, and that more deprives us of that spiritual comfort which we hope for from the service of God, than the inconstancy, and wandering, of our thoughts, while we are employed about *holy things*. And therefore I shall in this chapter endeavour to lay before you such remedies against *wandering thoughts*, as I hope may not be in vain.

This kind of evil thoughts doth in its compass take in all other kinds of them. For sometimes our *wandering thoughts* are profane and blasphemous, sometimes wanton and obscene, and sometimes idle and foolish, &c.

Now these wandering

thoughts when we are employed about holy things, are in a great measure owing to ourselves; and there is much in our power, in order to their cure. We will consider what are the principal occasions of them, and that will direct us to the remedies against them.

First then, *wandering thoughts* are oftentimes occasioned by a want of preparation to holy duties. We carelessly and temerarily rush on to the performance of them. We think indeed that they *must* be done; but yet consider not (as we ought)

² "We must not present common riches to God without preparation and choice; and the Passover Lamb was separated from the flock four days before its immolation. Let not the sinner then offer to God dirty and soiled prayers but pure and devout ones; let him separate his heart from the vanities of the world."—*The Christian's Guide*, p. 15, ed. 1683.

¹ On this subject the reader is referred to Bishop Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*, Chap. iv. § 7.

the *manner* of doing them. We go to our prayers as to our *secular* affairs; and make but little difference between the most *solemn* and *ordinary* actions of our life. Which is oftentimes the cause why our thoughts wander and scatter; and so we reap but little comfort, or advantage, from our best performances.

It is expedient then, and our duty before ever we engage in any set performance of the worship of God, that we prepare ourselves by some previous thoughts, and pious dispositions, that so we may come to our duty in a right manner; that our souls may be prepossessed, and fitted for the service of God.

We think it too bold and presuming to thrust ourselves into the presence of an earthly prince, without due consideration; and therefore surely it cannot be thought less to approach the face of the *Infinite God*, without a *solemn* composure of

spirit, and a preparation of thought. But besides the *evil* of so doing, the *natural consequence* of it is to make our thoughts loose and wandering; and unless we set about holy duties, with a due preparation of mind, it can hardly be conceived how it should be otherwise. When therefore we draw nigh unto God in the way of His Worship, either in our closets or families, or in the public assemblies of the Church, and especially in the last of these, it is our duty to dispose our hearts beforehand, and to settle them in a due frame of devotion; because our deportment, when we are actually engaged in it, doth mightily depend thereon. Thus the *Preacher*; *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the House of God, and be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything*

before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few. Eccles. v. 1, 2. This rule, in order to the avoiding wandering thoughts, may be but little minded, but it is nevertheless useful.³

Secondly, *Want of intention, and settling the mind on God in the actual performance of holy duties, is another great occasion of the wandering*

³ "Another proper remedy for the government of our thoughts in religious duties is to qualify and prepare our hearts beforehand for the performance; to discharge all thoughts of the world for that time from their attendance, to require them to stand by, *to tarry here or there, whilst we go and pray yonder.*"—Tullie, "Government of the Thoughts," p. 126, ed. 1694.

"*'Before thou prayest,'* says the wise son of Sirach, *'prepare thyself and be not as one that tempteth the Lord'* [i.e., I conceive, to be angry with thee, and to curse rather than bless thee], (Ecclus. xviii. 23). 'Twas one of the good things found in Jehoshaphat *'that he had prepared his heart to seek God'* (2 Chron. xix. 3); and no man pretends to good music before he has put his instrument in tune; when *our hearts are fixed*, O God, *when our hearts are fixed*, then shall we best sing and give praise."—Tullie, p. 128.

of our thoughts therein.

What is the reason of our complaints, that we do not hear the word of God to our spiritual comfort and advantage, pray with that fervour of devotion, praise Him with that enlargement of soul, and have the *relish* of divine things, which we would or ought? Why, it is for want of a due *care* of our thoughts, in the *actual* performance of holy duties; which naturally follows from the former, *viz.* the want of a due preparation beforehand. Why are our minds in the ends of the earth going a pilgrimage to strange countries, and travelling after foreign objects? Why, it is for want of a due *intention* of the soul upon God. It is because we do not possess our souls with an awe and fear of That God we worship; and consider not the *importance* of that duty we are employed in. When we come into the Presence of God, or into His courts to pay our

homage to Him, we should seriously consider into what an Infinite Presence we come; What, Who, That Glorious God is we worship; meditate on His wonderful Attributes; and form such an *idea* of Him, as conduceth to our *utmost* devotion. We should consider not only the Dignity and Infiniteness of That God, Whom we worship, but also that it is our *highest*, our *eternal interest* to serve, and worship, and obey Him; that it is our *truest* advantage and highest honour to approach to Him; and that we consult the everlasting good of our own souls, in *honouring Him*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. That He will be adored and worshipped in sincerity, and *true* devotion: that He will not dispense with an hypocritical and formal devotion, and a *show* of godliness: but as *He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*, so He is an avenger of all hypocrisy and insincerity.

If we come to Church,

only as a common and ordinary place, and set about holy duties, without the most *serious* application of mind, and an entire surrender of our souls, it will be impossible to avoid wandering thoughts.

When thou art therefore employed in any part of thy devotions, labour to fix thy thoughts *steadily* on God. Beware of an *unattentive*, *heedless*, or *indifferent* temper. Sequester thyself from everything that may withdraw thy thoughts. As *Moses*, by the Almighty's command, *pulled off the shoes from his feet*, when he went up into the Mount of Sinai, Exod. iii. 5, do thou fulfil the *mystery* of that action; and when thou comest at any time into the House of God to worship Him, bow down before the Lord Who is *more especially* present there, and say as the devout patriarch did, when in his sleep he saw that surprising vision, *Surely the Lord is in this place! How dreadful is this*

place! This is none other, but the House of God; and this is the gate of Heaven! Labour to have the eye of thy soul intent upon God; and thou wilt see such *excellent* and *wonderful* things in Him, as will effectually *charm* thy sight, and not suffer thee to look off, and thy *foolish* thoughts to be vain, and *wandering*, as they will inevitably be without such an *intention*.

Thirdly, *A dissolute, and unconstant, practice of holy duties, mightily conduceth to weaken and scatter our thoughts in them.* When we do not observe *constancy*, and *assiduity*, in our devotions we lose much of the holy fervour, and sacred temper, which otherwise we should be happy in.⁴

⁴ "If you carry a wheel half way up on an hill, and then leave it to itself for a moment; why, presently it will get to the valley's bottom again, and your labour will not only be imperfect, but will come just to nothing. Devotion is of this last sort of things; if you leave it half-done, what you had done will soon perish. 'Tis Penelope's web; what is done by day, is undone by night. If thy life be not

To omit our prayers, or other holy duties, twice perhaps for having performed them once; or to be devout, and worship God by starts and fits, and not in a regular and constant course; hath a very ill influence upon our thoughts. It is true we may have avocations, so that sometimes we shall not be able to observe our usual hours of devo-

a perpetual day, and if thou dost not incessantly toil to advance thy piety by practice, one night only formed by the darkness of indevotion, and the absence of God's grace, will ruin the work of many years, and one minute of laziness will destroy that which courage, upheld a long time, had produced.

. . . Sampson delivers himself up into the arms of Dalilah, he sleeps in her breast, his hair is shaved, which is the seat of his strength, and when he awakes he goes according to custom to take away the gates of Gath, and break the cords of the Philistines, but he doth not find himself the same Sampson. So the Christian that is weakened by a non-assiduity to devotion, sleeps in the arms of pleasure; his soul is enervated; he thinks to return to his old wont of having commerce with God, but the Devil attacks and overloads him by a load of evil thoughts, under which his devotion lies bound as by so many chains."—*The Christian's Guide*, pp. 180-1.

tion. But alas ! we often make that an hindrance, which should be none ; and by not being *constant* in keeping our times and seasons for holy duties, but being drawn aside by every vanity, visit, or trifle, our thoughts become vain, idle, and *wandering*, when we come to do our duty. The sacred temper is worn off ; the mind is out of that *frame* of devotion in which it was left by the last performance ; and God is provoked to withdraw His aids from such inconstant worshippers. This is a matter very well worth our notice and observation ; and lets us see the inconvenience and danger of missing prayers, or other holy duties, but *once*, without a reasonable cause.

IV. In this case also, *too much liberty given our senses is of very evil influence* ; and therefore we must be very watchful over them, if we would prevent the aberrations of our minds, when we are employed about holy duties.

What is the reason that our devotion is no more than lip-service ? That our hearts are so *far* from God, when we are in His more immediate Presence ? That instead of being influenced with the love of God, humbled to the dust with a sense of His *Greatness*, raised up with admiration of His excellences and perfections, our thoughts are engaged either in foolish and silly, or wanton and impure, speculations ? Why, it is because we do not carefully guard our senses, but give them an offensive liberty, by which means the *Church* of God is many times made a *theatre*, or *exchange*. What is it that men come into the Presence of God for ? Is it not the greatest honour, and privilege of a *poor creature*, to come into the Presence of his *Creator* ? Is it not for most weighty and important ends that he comes *there* ? Is it not in order to reconciliation with God, pardon of his sins, the Divine assis-

tance, and in the end the eternal salvation of his *precious* soul? Are these *little*, and *trifling* things? Are they not the greatest concerns that can be? Surely they are. And therefore those who walk, whisper, talk, gaze, laugh. &c., when they are employed about *holy* things, do much betray their stupidity and folly, and their mean and irreligious sense of the *greatest* things in the world.

And besides, they can never think to please God by such a *sacrifice of fools*; but do indeed greatly provoke Him thereby. There cannot be a clearer argument of the *vanity* and *profaneness* of a man's mind, than an unserious and loose deportment in the worship of God; to which nothing administers more than a careless liberty given our senses. For it is certain, if we would have our thoughts kept steady and intent, we must diligently keep our *senses*. And he that would preserve his soul

from *wandering*, must never be so oddly at leisure in his devotions, as to gaze on this or *that* thing, or person that hath fine clothes, or a strange face, or suffer any of his senses to be triflingly employed.

This then is also a rule necessary to be observed, in order to the avoiding *this* kind of evil thoughts, *viz. wandering thoughts* in the worship of *God*; which are often very troublesome, and uneasy to our souls; and many times render our sacred performances *fruitless* too.

V. In the next place, it may be observed, That to wandering and vain thoughts in the worship of God, doth very much conduce a pompous multitude of ceremonies, such as there is in the Church of *Rome*, which is quite beyond the bounds of gravity, and decency.

But, thanks be to God, we of the Church of *England* are in no danger of having our thoughts thus drawn aside. Because those *few* ceremonies

which are observed in it, are appointed in great wisdom and discretion; and there is not the *least* thing in all our Liturgy, that is apt to excite *one* vain, or wandering thought in any man's mind; but *all* is so uniformly ordered and disposed, as greatly tends to the increase of piety, and advancement of true devotion. This *must* be acknowledged by all sober and impartial men, so that I need only *mention* this particular.

But yet there is one thing, which I think to be here worth our notice, and which very much conduceth to the prevention of wandering thoughts in the worship of God. And that is an *uniformity of action in the Divine Service*. My meaning is, that we *should kneel* when others kneel, and *stand*, when they stand, (as the Church in the rubrics appoints) and observe an harmony in our *outward* deportments, as well as *inward* devotions; and *this* will be a means of

preserving our thoughts from flying off. Whereas when this person kneels, and another stands up, a third sits down, a fourth leans, &c., this is apt to beget in us an improper variety of thoughts, and to make our minds wandering.⁵

VI. *Covetousness, and worldly-mindedness, necessarily makes our thoughts vain and wandering, while we are about holy things*. In this case especially it is true, that *No man can serve God and Mammon*. We can no more have our thoughts *heavenly* and *earthly*, *spiritual* and *carnal*, at the same time, than we can look upward and downward at once. *Covetousness* therefore, and *worldly-mindedness*, must needs be avoided, if we would escape *wandering thoughts*. For *how* can such a man

⁵ A sober and not extravagant ritualism (to use a modern term), established upon uniform use, would be a good rule for the prevention of wandering thoughts, and such, doubtless, would have been Chilcot's opinion.

pray, or serve God in any tolerable manner, who hath all the while his heart and affections set upon the *world*? How can he attend upon the ordinances of God, without interruption; whose mind is at home, about his riches, farms, or his merchandise? These things *steal* away his thoughts, and for that reason *covetousness* is (by St. Paul) termed *idolatry*, Col. iii. 5. Here therefore especially must we practise that advice of our Blessed Saviour: *Takenothought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek :) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,* Matt. vi. 31, &c.

Whenever therefore thou settest about the duty of *prayer, meditation,*

or any other holy duty, either in private or public, be sure to shut out all *covetous, sensual, and worldly* thoughts. Let not thy mind hanker after those *flesh-pots*, when thou art going into *Canaan*, and to have some prospect, though not to take *possession*, of the promised land. This is the way to have thy mind fixed and intent, and by that means bettered and edified. This is the mystical meaning of that action of our Saviour, *viz. His whipping the buyers and sellers out of the temple, saying, My House shall be called the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.* Matt. xxi. 12, 13, &c. It was to shew that when we come into the *House of God*, to worship the *Eternal Majesty*, and in all other holy duties, we should abhor all such profane mixtures, as *covetousness* and *worldly-mindedness*, which are the *tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves*; and alto-

gether unsuitable to those holy performances we are about. We must therefore take our leave of all worldly, covetous, or anxious thoughts; otherwise our minds must unavoidably wander, when like that of *Martha*, they are *cumbered about many things*, Luke x. 40. All the cares of the world must be banished from our hearts. Even *prudent* and *honest* care is unseasonable here, and nothing but this *one thing necessary* must be minded. As for all worldly thoughts, or terrestrial imaginations, we must *shake off the very dust of them from our feet*. We must in our devotions soar so high, as to be out of reach of the fatal magnetism of earth. This must we endeavour to do, if we would avoid this kind of evil thoughts, viz. wandering thoughts in holy duties.

VII. Again: *In the next place there must not be the least grain of ambition, or vain-glory, in any of our performances;*

for that will carry away our thoughts and imaginations after a thousand *vain*, and *foolish* objects. The approving ourselves to an *Omniscient God*, must be our *sole* end in all holy duties. And the only reason of our being pleased with our *best*, and most excellent performances, (if such sinful ones can any of them be called so) should be that they the *more* tend to the glory of God; lest we lose all the reward of them, and incur that *just opprobrium* of our Saviour's woe on the Scribes and *Pharisees*: *When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: For they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men: Verily I say unto you, they have their reward, Matt. vi. 5.*

To these rules and directions, in order to the avoiding *wandering thoughts*, may be added, *A careful observance of all the duties of the Lord's*

Day; aminding the things of this world (when they ought to be minded) *with indifference; and a trust in the over-ruling providence of God. That we be more and more humble and repenting.*

That there remain no sin unmortified in us.

A devout and earnest praying to be delivered from them, that so we may serve God without distraction, in imitation of the blessed in Heaven, &c.

These are the *principal* rules that I could discover, in order to the avoiding ~~vain~~ and wandering thoughts in the worship of God; which are oftentimes an unspeakable affliction to *good Christians*, and which it is no small difficulty to prevent.

But if after the use of these directions, which I have laid down, and all that we can do, we *cannot* be rid of them, but they will still haunt and disturb us, yet ~~we~~ *we* must persist in our duty. Though they should come very thick upon us, yet we must not

be discouraged from our duty; for leaving that undone is (I am sure) far from being a remedy against them, and gives the *Devil* a greater advantage over us than we are aware. We must therefore continue in our duty, though it be with an heavy heart; and then we shall retain the *virtue*, though we lose the *present satisfaction* of our obedience. God sees the sincerity of our hearts, and will *assuredly* reward us at the last. Although the *Devil* (who hath a great hand in these thoughts also, as we find in the parable of the *Sower*, Matt. xiii.) doth continually vex, and trouble us with them; yet let us wait upon God with patience, and an humble observance of these rules laid down, as far as we are able; and then we shall be in no danger by reason of such thoughts, though we should be grappling, and fighting with them, as long as we live. It is impossible, I think,

that we should be *totally* freed from them in this *fluid medium*; in this state of frailty and corruption; that the mind should be *quite* cleansed of these annoyances. But yet we are to consider that our life is a continual warfare; and our condition here a state of imperfection; and that therefore ~~we are~~ not to despair, as ~~if we~~ had done no good; because we have not attained to what this life cannot afford.

But to comfort ourselves with *this, viz.* that if in obedience to God's commands, we maintain the combat, and fight against them, and use such remedies as are prescribed, God will accept our endeavours, pass by our infirmities, and grant us at last a *complete*

victory in heaven above, which alone is *consummation*; where we shall be free from bodily weaknesses (which many times greatly administer to such, and indeed I think to most ~~other~~, *evil thoughts*) and from all the feeblenesses and impotencies of the mind; from all vain and enticing objects from *without*; and from all the treachery of corruption from *within*; from every *wanton* glance, *every vain* imagination, and every *idle* thought.⁶

⁶ "Prayers and praises are the spiritual life of a Christian, and, therefore, when any foreign thoughts assail it either by force or fraud, we must take up Nehemiah's answer to his enemies: '*I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease whilst I leave it and come down to you?*'"—Tullie, p. 129.

CHAPTER IX

Melancholy and despairing thoughts

WE are now come to the last kind of evil thoughts, which I shall more particularly handle in this treatise, viz. *sad, melancholy, or despairing thoughts*. And in order to our taking a true observation of these, and applying proper remedies against them, we are to take notice, that the occasion of *these* thoughts is partly in the habit and constitution of the body. This is undeniable to any person that hath made but the *least* observation in things of this nature; for those persons, who are most of all troubled with this kind of evil thoughts (for such they are to be reckoned) are *hypochondriacal* and *hysterical* people, and whose constitution is impaired by some bodily disease; and therefore the remedies against them, must be partly *natural*,

and partly *spiritual*. But yet I hope I shall not be thought to trespass, if I happen to speak a word or two of the *former*.

Dea bona valetudo—

Health, is the greatest of *temporal* mercies, and that without which we can but weakly prosecute our *spiritual* concerns. It is the soul of life; and as we can never be too thankful to God for it, so every act of excess, whereby it is impaired, is a greater sin than men are aware; because it is the great advantage of health and vigour of body, that it renders us capable of serving God, and of duly preparing ourselves for the eternal enjoyment of Him. Every disease hath an influence upon the soul; and the indispositions of the body, do and will affect the mind, notwithstanding all the dreams of the *Stoics*. But of all the diseases in-

cident to human bodies, that of *melancholy* deserves most to be pitied. It should not be slighted with thereproachful names of *whimsy*, and mere *fancy*. It is a great injury done to persons who are affected with it, to disregard their complaints, and laugh at their miseries. Though they should not indulge them, yet some pity is due to them. Did they but know the woe and anguish, the terror and amazement, that they endure; could they but be sensible of half their misery, they could not choose but pity them. An *hypochondriacal* or *hysterical* person, that is *deeply* affected with the disease, is an object that as well deserves compassion, as any other whatsoever. And if I should endeavour to give you an adequate description of that malady, it would fill a volume. What an infinite variety of thoughts of all kinds are the effects of it! Which being in a great measure owing to *the disease*, the hurry of

the imagination following that of the animal spirits, there are some *natural* remedies to be made use of, for which I must leave you to the learned in nature, who will tell you, that *very much* depends upon *observation* and *exercise*. That to be morigerous¹ and moderate in eating and drinking, and to be much in bodily exercise, but not violent, is most proper advice. If a person hath but the virtue to be regular in his way of living, and the patience to *continue* in bodily exercise, he doth a great deal towards making his life more easy, and his thoughts more comfortable. For everything that tends to make the blood and spirits lively, regular, and vigorous, *tends* to dispel the blackness and heaviness of the thoughts. Which therefore whoever is so unhappy as to be afflicted with *melancholy*, must study; he must (I say) apply himself to the use

¹ An obsolete word signifying "obedient to custom or rule."

of such things as tend to cherish his blood, and exalt his spirits; to which all vicious extremes are directly contrary. The learned *physicians* will also tell you, That none are more voracious of *medicines*, than melancholy persons; but that their desire in *that* is no more to be indulged, than in many other things; and that there may be too much, as well as too little. — But I am gone too far this way. I would only have it observed, That sad, melancholy, and even *despairing* thoughts, are sometimes the consequences of this disease; for *such* it is, as much as a fever, or any other; and therefore the physician must be consulted.

But although the infirmities of the body do very much conduce to *such* thoughts as these, yet we should be mindful that there is the hand of God in them too; and not so to lay the blame upon natural indisposition, as to have no other thoughts

about it. We may not think that this case is purely *physical*, and that therefore there is no need of any *spiritual* remedies; for there is.

I. The first of which that I conceive to be proper, is a *strict and faithful examination of our own selves*. We must call ourselves to an account, search into our own hearts and lives, and see what we have been, and done. And perhaps we may find some *great* and *wilful* sin that we have been guilty of; or some *wrong*, or *injustice*, that we continue in; which happens to be the cause of all our blackness, and sadness; and these dismal thoughts which so affright us, are no other than the checks of our own conscience, which is a faithful monitor, and adviser, and impartially censures and judges all our actions. The good that we do it approves of, commends, and applauds in us; but no wilful sin can escape its lashes and bitter re-

proaches. Its authority is an emblem of the *Almighty's* Power, and Omniscience; and its sentence *præjudicium ultimi judicii*. It will in spite of the sinner, *set his sins in order before him*; and fill him with horror, and trembling, and fearful thoughts; which if they arise from *hence*, there is no remedy but *repentance*. Nothing but the tears of a godly sorrow can ease his heavy heart; and renewed resolutions of watchfulness, and a more diligent obedience for the time to come, are the best expedient to remove the blackness and sadness that is upon his soul. And when the sinner hath *truly* repented, and there is an entire change wrought upon him, then he may hope for the light of *God's* countenance to shine upon him; and that *He will comfort him now after the time that He hath plagued him, and for the years wherein he hath suffered adversity*. But if upon a serious and deep

examination of himself, he cannot find that these sad and frightful thoughts, which infest him, proceed from any such cause, as some wilful and notorious sin, but that the sincere and earnest desire of his soul is *always* to please God, and to keep a true conformity to all His laws, and commands, Then

Secondly, The next remedy against these black and despairing thoughts, is *the consideration of the transcendent goodness of God*.² This is a proper means to fortify our minds

² "All heaviness of mind and melancholy come of the devil, especially those thoughts that God is not gracious unto him, that God will have no mercy upon him, &c. Whosoever thou art, possessed with such heavy thoughts, know for certain that they are the work of the devil. God sent His Son into the world not to affright, but to comfort. Therefore be of good courage, and think that henceforth thou art not the child of a human creature, but of God through faith in Christ, in Whose name thou art baptized; therefore the spear of death cannot enter into thee; he has no right unto thee; much less can he hurt and prejudice thee, for he is everlastingly swallowed up through Christ."—*Luther*, p. 270.

against them. Why shall I think that I am cast off by *God*, and forsaken by Him? What argument can there be for desperation? Why is my heart so dismal; my thoughts so troubled; my fears so tempestuous? Is it because I am a great sinner? Truly that is a sufficient cause for me to be sorrowful, and humbled to the very dust; and floods of tears are not enough to bewail the guilt of my sin. But yet, O consider the *goodness of God!* He is the most loving and merciful *Being*; a compassionate and forgiving *Father*. He is *more* our *Father* than our earthly parents can be. He is *essentially* good in Himself, and good and gracious to His creatures. He is ready, and willing to receive every penitent sinner, be his sins never so great, *Luke* xv. Nay, He lovingly invites him to come to Him, *Matt.* xi. 28. And *this* is a consideration, which should be a means to make thee

grieve with such a sorrow, as will bring thee to Him, and not drive thee from Him; such a sorrow as may prompt thee to the performance of all that thou knowest to be thy duty; and not such a sorrow as totally incapacitates thee for it, and so is both a *dishonour to God*, and a very great *injury* to thy own soul. And therefore thou hast all imaginable reason to thrust out all *black, dismal, or despairing thoughts*.

Cast thine eyes abroad into the world. See! This noble structure was the effect of God's *goodness*; and all the beauties and riches of it, bespeak His *kindness*, and *benignity*. Behold this ample theatre of praise! wherein everything shows forth His goodness! And then look in upon *thyself*, and thou wilt find thy ownself another world of the Divine goodness! What instances of God's goodness canst thou discover in thyself! What particulars of His patience, and numer-

ous acts of His loving-kindness !

III. *This* therefore in the third place, is also another consideration, which would be a proper remedy against this kind of evil thoughts before us.

Consider then your own experiences of God's goodness. When thou art at any time haunted with any dreadful, killing, despairing thoughts, as if thou wert reprobated of God, and consigned to eternal damnation, call to mind how much of the forbearance, and bounty, and goodness of God thou hast experimented ; and then thou wilt see how *little* reason thou hast to yield to such confounding thoughts. Nay, He doth not only *spare* thee, and extend His patience towards thee, but is multiplying His other *mercies* upon thee ; and so gives thee all the convincing proofs that can be, that He desireth not the death of any sinner, but is the Great Lover of souls, and *would have all men to be*

saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Tim. ii. 4.

How many dangers and evils hath He delivered thee from ! Nay, hath He not delivered thee from hurting thy own self, and by some strange providence or other baffled thy wicked intentions ? In a word, what large experience hast thou had of the *goodness* of God, both to thy soul and body ! How then canst thou be tempted to think that God hath rejected thee, when thou feelest irrefragable arguments to the contrary in thyself ; when thou *tastest* and *seest*, and hast *demonstration, how good, and how gracious the Lord is ?* No, it is the devil's suggestion, to torment and disquiet thee. For he will not fail to persecute those whom he cannot kill, and terrify those whom he is not able to destroy. It is the stratagem of the accursed enemy of our peace, who takes advantage, perhaps of the weakness, and tenderness of thy spirits,

caused by some bodily indisposition or other, to inject dreadful thoughts; representing Almighty God as an implacable Judge, endeavouring to make Him seem the same to us that He is to himself. *We are not ignorant of his devices*, and of his restless malice, 2 Cor. ii. 11. If those poor creatures, who are afflicted with this kind of evil thoughts, could but be brought to entertain this consideration, *viz.* what experience they have had of the goodness of the Lord, and argue as this particular teacheth them, they would (it is hoped) find much ease and relief, and be convinced, that their desponding thoughts are very absurd, and unreasonable; and moreover, a dishonour, and a reflection upon the Divine Goodness.

IV. Art thou at any time afflicted with any melancholy, dismal, or despairing thoughts? As a remedy against them, *consider on the mystery of*

man's redemption by Christ Jesus; and there thou wilt find such arguments against thoughts of this nature, as should (one would think) be able entirely to subdue and conquer them. How great, how incomprehensible is that Goodness, that not only gave a being to the world, and enriched all creatures with His beneficence, but sent down the Eternal Son of God, to redeem undone man! Who can form a thought worthy of such Goodness? O Christians, think with your *utmost* intention, how great the dignity of That Person is, Who was our Saviour, and then think seriously on what He did to redeem us! What tongue can express, or mind conceive, the agonies that He endured, when He became the Propitiation and Atonement? The wrath that lay upon Him, when He interposed between an angry God, and sinful man? His sufferings were vastly above the reach of our thoughts; and our

ideas of His sorrow, are all faint and imperfect. Good God! How can we choose but stand amazed at the great mystery of man's salvation, admire the contrivance of the infinite wisdom therein, and adore the Divine philanthropy? Who can despair of mercy from Him, Who hath given us His own Son? How can we think He will reject us for ever, when He spared not His own Son for us? In the circumstances that we are under the Gospel, presumption is an evil to which (methinks) we should be more probably tempted, than despair (though both of them are most unreasonable and abominable), because such illustrious goodness, such unparalleled mercy is displayed in this *Evangelical æconomy*, such *peace on earth, and good will towards men*, Luke ii. 14, as is enough for ever to silence all the sad complaints of desponding sinners, and to comfort, and encourage, the most guilty

soul to true and unfeigned repentance.

When the Devil therefore at any time tempts thee to despair of God's mercy, and to think that thou art eternally wretched, or hast committed the unpardonable sin, shew him the Gospel, oppose to his temptations the glorious mystery of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, set before him the noble design, and the most generous overture of the *Gospel*; and that will be a means to aggravate his despair, but to comfort and support *thee*, who art within that covenant which he is not. Christ came into the world to save thee. He died to satisfy the justice of God for thee. He rose again for our *justification*, Rom. iv. 25. He is gone into heaven, to intercede with God continually in thy behalf, and to procure all manner of good for thee. He is God All-powerful, All-sufficient, and most Merciful. What an affront then is it to such a Re-

deemer, to yield to black and despairing thoughts ! What a reproach cast upon His Merit and Satisfaction, and a cowardly, and pusillanimous disowning of His Power and Goodness, and a diffidence in His Veracity, and the authenticity of His Gracious Promises !

V. *The application of the sweet and precious promises contained in the word of God, is also a proper expedient against this kind of evil thoughts.* As the Scripture contains terrible and severe threatenings, to deter secure and stubborn sinners, so it is a treasure of most comfortable promises, for the support and stay of mournful, and timorous souls ; without which indeed it would be sometimes an hard matter for poor *Christians* to bear up under the thoughts of an approaching eternity, and to resist the furious assaults, and the *fiery darts of the Devil*. Almighty God hath therefore engaged His Veracity,

that if we fear Him, and keep His Commandments, live according to the plain rules of the Gospel, and believe, we shall be assuredly happy and blessed. In order to which, He hath also liberally promised all such supplies of grace and assistance as we shall at any time need. These promises therefore we should firmly believe, and lay hold on, and apply to ourselves, when we are at any time haunted with such desperate injections as we are speaking of. In vain have Christians this spiritual armory and magazine, if they let these weapons of war lie unused.

Ah ! but, says the disconsolate and drooping soul, I am satisfied of the goodness of God ; of the infinite merit of Jesus Christ ; that He was an inestimable Oblation for sin, and a Sacrifice of transcendent value ; but oh ! I fear that the virtue of that great Sacrifice belongs not to me. But hear what comfortable

words our Saviour Christ saith, unto all them that truly turn to Him : *Come unto Me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden with the burden of your sins, and I will refresh you,* John iii. 16. *So God loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

I believe also, saith the desponding soul, *the exceeding great and precious promises* ; I am fully persuaded that *in Christ all the promises of God are Yea and Amen* ; and that *heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of God's word shall pass away* ; but these promises do not appertain to me. I have forfeited all title and claim to them ; and therefore, Oh ! am certainly lost and undone for ever.—But let me beseech thee, whoever thou art, that art depressed with such thoughts as these, to beware, and consider, That this is a bold

and a peremptory sentence, which thou passest on thyself ; such a sentence as none of all the created beings can affirm. It is the suggestion of the most desperate being, the enemy of our souls ; and what finite being can, without the height of presumption, pass such a sentence upon any person ? Which, too, is so far from being true, that it is utterly false.

For the gracious promises of the Gospel are offered to all whatsoever ; none are excepted. And every one that will lay hold of them, hath a title to them, provided he comes up to the conditions on which they are established. And therefore, in God's Name, hearken no longer to such terrifying thoughts ; but let this still the boisterous and troubled sea, spread a calm over thy mind, and stir thee up to a devout application of the blessed promises of God, to thy own sinful soul.

VI. *Constant and devout prayer is here also*

absolutely necessary. Pray we therefore that God would quiet, and still, our hurried and affrighted spirits; that He would, in mercy, be pleased to give us a right understanding of ourselves, His promises, and threatenings, that we may not cast away our confidence in Him, nor place it anywhere but in Him. That God would vouchsafe to deliver us from the terrors of *Satan*, who is by *St. Peter* styled *A roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. v. 8. That He would scatter these black clouds and mists, which overspread our souls, with the light of His Countenance, and shine in upon our *drooping, sorrowful, and sick* souls. That the *Sun of Righteousness may arise upon us, with healing in His wings*; and that the Lord would grant us that inward joy, and peace of conscience, which the world cannot give, and *which passeth all understanding.* That He would

no longer hide His Face from us; but shew us some glimpse of His favour, which is *better than the life itself.* That He would heal all the diseases and infirmities both of our souls and bodies, *that the bones which He hath broken may rejoice.* Is any among you afflicted (saith *St. James*, Ch. v. ver. 13,) *let him pray.* Then especially is a proper time to seek God's Face. *Call upon Me* (saith God) *in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me*, Psal. l. 15.

Ah! but I cannot pray! I cannot perform any holy duty, or fix to any one part of religion. I no sooner retire into my closet, or kneel down upon my knees, but a thousand terrors infest me; so that I think it were better to let devotion alone, than to perform it no better. Ah, Lord! But let me ask thee, Dost thou do thy utmost? Dost thou sincerely desire to do thy duty, and to please God? and dost

thou put a force upon thyself, sometimes to perform the duty of prayer, or any other holy duty, though it be with many interruptions and distractions ! Continue to do so ; for by so doing thou wilt approve thyself unto God, Who seeth thy heart, and, in all probability, thy fears and terrors will by degrees vanish, these sad and dismal thoughts will lessen, and at length quite leave thee.

God is a God hearing prayers. He will be sought to in our distresses, and implored in our afflictions. Say then, with the Psalmist, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou so disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God.* (pray to Him) *for I shall yet praise Him, Who is the help of my countenance, and my God.* Psal. xlii. ult.

VII. Again : *To prevent these sad, dejected, or despairing thoughts we are speaking of, we must be careful that we do not love the world immoderately.* For how remote

soever *covetousness* may seem from *despair*, the former doth frequently conduce to the latter. He that sets too great a value upon the things of this world, and a temporal prosperity, will not only be greatly hindered from doing his spiritual duty, but when it pleaseth God to deprive him of his prosperity, he is very apt to be extremely disquieted, and repining ; and sometimes to look upon himself as utterly forsaken of God, because he is stripped of those outward things. He mistakingly looks upon temporal good things to be certain marks of God's favour ; whereas in truth they are not, but He sometimes deals them *promiscuously, as the rain descends both upon the just and unjust*, Psal. lxxiii.

And what is the likely consequence of such an enormous love of the world, if, I say, it should please God to bring such an one into adversity, but that he should have dismal, and even despairing

thoughts of his own condition? There have been frequent examples of this nature in the world; and thus far have these words of the Apostle been verified: *But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtfull lusts, which drown men in perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

Let us not therefore set our affections too much upon these fleeting things. Let us enjoy every good thing with submission to, and dependence upon, God's providence. Let us beware that we do not fix our hearts on any thing here below; neither riches, possessions, friends, children, nor any of these sublunary things; for so doing hath oftentimes proved very fatal to many, and at last hath thrown

them into melancholy, nay, even into desperation.

VIII. *The last remedy against black, dreadful, or despairing thoughts, is, religious and cheerful conversation.* It is not jolly, vain company; that will be of no use, but hurt; but godly and cheerful society will very much contribute to their cure. To be always poring, aggravates the malady, and rivets the despair, and sometimes proves fatal indeed; and therefore a little good conversation is very necessary. Religious discourses and conferences will keep out worse thoughts, and conduce very much to make us *rejoice with them that do rejoice.* There is a kind of melody in them, which like that of *David's* harp, when he played to *Saul*, will drive away the evil spirit, 1 Sam. xvi. 23. It is a common thing for such persons as are troubled with this kind of thoughts, to affect solitude, and desire to be always alone, and immured

in their own sad contemplations. But notwithstanding the strongest aversion to company which they may have, it is advisable, that against their inclinations, they be brought into good and cheerful conversation; and that not once, or twice, but with continuance. And this is a proper way, in time, to berid of such evil thoughts. For, the *Devil's* temptations and injections, especially of this kind, are usually more prevalent, and come with greater force, when people are alone, than when they are in society; and then too, they are apt to dote upon their own notions of things, hug their mistakes, and think them true, however false and erroneous they may be.

A religious and cheerful friend therefore I take in this case to be of great advantage, to comfort, advise, divert, and improve them in better things; *and more especially do I recommend the frequent conversation of their*

spiritual guide. For it is not to be imagined what efficacy a seasonable word hath sometimes; and what a sweet alteration it causes in disconsolate people. *It goeth like oil into their bones;* or else, to use the Preacher's comparison, *The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.* Good conversation strengthens and exhilarates the spirits to a great degree, and is a very proper means against all sad and melancholy, or despairing thoughts.

And indeed, I think, religion is that which goes a great way towards the cure of melancholy; and without it, it is hardly ever to be cured. It is religion must give a man a rational, and a well-grounded, hope of the security of his eternal condition hereafter, without which it is difficult to imagine how his heart should ever be easy, and his thoughts serene, quiet, and composed. And therefore he that would

avoid this kind of evil thoughts, I exhort and advise him first to fix the grand point of religion in himself; and then to cherish, and improve it by cheerful and religious conversation.

But in doing this, we must not think that we can be *always* employed in religion, that we can have our thoughts stretched up always to such a pitch, to be continually engaged in the duties of devotion, and be thinking that we cannot please God without it. For we have *bodies* as well as souls. We are men, and not angels. And therefore though we should do our utmost, and with all imaginable sincerity, yet we should not lay too great a load upon our spirits; for that may be the way, instead of preventing, to bring on sad and melancholy thoughts. And it is what Almighty God nowhere requires of us, *Who will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, Hos. vi. 6, and intended His service for

perfect freedom, and religion for a *law of liberty*, James i. 25.

I have now done with this last kind of *evil thoughts*, (*viz.*) *sad, melancholy, or despairing thoughts*. And the rules which have been laid down for the well-governing the thoughts in general, and for the avoiding this sort, and those other kinds, of evil thoughts, discoursed of in this treatise, duly observed, will, by God's blessing, have some good effect.

But as an appendix to this chapter, I shall endeavour to explain to you ~~what~~ is the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*; because the fear that they have committed this *unpardonable* sin, hath horribly perplexed and terrified the thoughts of many dejected Christians, even almost to desperation.

Now *every* sin is indeed a sin against the Holy Ghost, and some are grievances of Him, and therefore we are exhorted not to *grieve the Holy*

Spirit of God, Ephes. iv. 30. But the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which is pronounced by our Lord Jesus Himself to be unpardonable in this world, and in the world to come, is called also Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost by the Evangelists. In Mat. xii. 31, 32, the words are these: Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, i.e. is capable of being forgiven: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him; neither in this world, nor in the world to come. In Mark iii. 28, &c. it is thus expressed: Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost,

hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. And in Luke xii. 10, there is but little variation: Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.

Now for the clearer understanding of these places which speak of the Great Sin, you are to observe, That the two former of these Evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Mark, in the context, give us an account of our Saviour's having healed a demoniac; and when He had expelled the devil by the power of the Holy Ghost, (Which He had without measure) to the great amazement of all the people, the Scribes and Pharisees, whose hearts were soured with the leaven of pride and envy, notwithstanding their own convictions, and in spite of the irresistible evidence of that and other miracles, which our Saviour did,

they blasphemously ascribed the doing of them to the Devil ; representing our Lord as a wizard, or a conjurer ; and as absurdly as impiously said, *He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.* The obstinacy and malice of this imputation our Saviour severely reflects upon, and publicly declares, That those that out of an envenomed spirit, and wilful spite, and against the strongest convictions, thus blaspheme the Holy and Eternal Spirit, by the œconomy of Whose almighty power these things were done, and thus endeavour to subvert the whole structure of the Christian religion, and wilfully disown Christ the Saviour, those have no other means of salvation left them, no other Name under heaven, by which they can be saved. There is no other Christ, no other Gospel, and therefore nothing shall be the portion of such men, but eternal damnation.

From all which it is sufficiently plain, That the Sin against the Holy Ghost consisteth in words ; it is blasphemy ; and not every blasphemy against the Holy Ghost neither. Not every one that speaketh against the Holy Ghost (as some heretics have done, and now do) is guilty of this Unpardonable Sin ; which is a blasphemy against the visible glorious operations, the immediate effects and office of the Holy Ghost ; and such too as is uttered not out of fear, infirmity, or cowardice, but out of an hateful and malicious heart ; not of rashness, but of set purpose, to do despite unto Christ's known doctrine and works ; being accompanied with an universal defection, or falling away from the whole truth of God. So that, if this sin in its formality could be committed now, from this short explanation of the nature of it, I hope it doth appear, that none of those who are scared, and terrified with the apprehen-

sions of it, can have committed it; and that therefore their fears, and dismal thoughts about it, are groundless and unreasonable, and stirred up by the common Enemy of our peace, in order to disquiet and hinder them from doing their duty, or to bring them into melancholy or despair.

It is most certain, that all persons that wilfully run on in sin, and persist in impenitency, shall finally perish for ever, as surely as if they had committed the great sin we are speaking of. But it is also certain that thousands do out of ignorance, or inadvertence, mistake the nature of this Unpardonable Sin, and are horribly afraid that they have committed it, though they know not what it is. The vilest action, the greatest sin of practice, that can be committed, doth not

extend to *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, and therefore such a sin calls indeed for the deepest sorrow, and humiliation, and most unfeigned repentance, but the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and repentance, are things very inconsistent.* And this ariseth not from any defect of mercy in God, or want of merit in the Blood of Christ, but from an incapacity in the offender. Upon the whole then you see what this concluding sin is, and consequently how little reason many poor dejected souls have to be affrighted with the thoughts of having committed it, and to sink, and despond upon mere doubts, conjectures, and suspicions.

* "To fear lest we have committed it, or have been near committing it, is a proof we have not committed it."—Pusey, *Sermon on this Sin*, p. 20.

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

NO man can be a good Christian indeed, that hath not a special regard to his thoughts, and doth not endeavour to have them pure, holy, and conformable to the laws of the Gospel. And the government of the thoughts is an happiness never to be attained, without the most deep and serious consideration, and a ready and willing application of ourselves to proper means ; the which I have in the preceding chapters endeavoured to lay before you ; and we may not think that it is altogether impossible to put them in practice. There is unquestionably a great deal in our own power, in order to it, as plainly appears from the whole series of this treatise. And it is no more than what is the evident design of the Christian religion, by which the great

excellency of it, not only above all other arts and sciences, which, in their perfection, are only the riches and ornaments of the outward man, but beyond all other religions whatsoever, is manifest.

Christianity soars above all the tempting gaities, and little noisy vanities of this world. It is not its business to seek after the silly applauses of the age, or popular admiration. It is not to be seen of men, or to inherit this bubble. It is not only to appear outwardly great, or good ; but the design of it is an internal purity and holiness ; a conformity of our thoughts to the rules of the Gospel.

The philosophy of the Gentile world, though it went far, yet came vastly short of it ; and all the excellent rules delivered by the ancient moralists,

for the government of life, are much below the Divine Oracles. As for the *Jewish* religion, it consisted of mere elements, and first rudiments, *Gal.* iv. 9. The Law being (as the Apostle tells us) but *as the schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, Gal.* iii. 24. The Law was delivered in *blackness and thick darkness* on Mount *Sinai*, *Deut.* iv. 11, and indeed it was but darkness, in comparison of the more bright discoveries of the Evangelical state, which consisteth not in types, figures, and shadows, and parabolical and mystical rites, but in plain and perfective precepts, in such admirable rules and directions as, duly observed, will wonderfully enrich and beautify the *soul*, and bring it near to perfection, by a resemblance of God Himself, and dispose, and prepare it for the blissful enjoyment of heaven, and the Beatific Vision.

The rites of the pagan religions did consist in the

vilest impurities. And as for *Mahomet*, as ambition and lust were the first motives to ~~his~~ imposture, so lewdness and obscenity is his heaven too. And indeed other religions too have taken care to propagate uncleanness, under the specious pretences of a recluse life, and the severest purity.

But true religion indeed, such as our Lord Jesus always preached, and urged upon men, and is built upon the genuine design of the Holy Scriptures, refines and purifies the soul to the utmost, will not allow men in a loose or an evil thought, much less grant them indulgences for all manner of lewdness, and dispense with such things as are not fit to be named among Christians. But its only design and intention is to make men like angels, and the pure celestial spirits, and qualify them for their society and happiness to everlasting ages.

This plainly shows us the excellency of the Chris-

tian religion above any other institution in the world ; powerfully recommends it to our choice, and convinceth us of the necessity of being good and holy, if we would be eternally happy ; and of the great importance of our serious and religious application and improvement of these words of the Eternal Son of God :—
For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.

I conclude with that apposite advice of the holy Apostle St. Paul, Phil. iv. 8, &c. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.*

A Prayer for a Melancholy Person

O ETERNAL, most Gracious, and most Holy Lord God ! Thou Father of lights and Fountain of good ! Thou art infinitely and essentially Happy and Blessed in Thyself, and diffusest the beams of Thy favour and goodness throughout the whole world. I am a monument of Thy mercy and forbearance ; and when I consider what I have been, and done, I cannot but wonder at Thy loving kindness ! O Lord, I lie prostrate at the Throne of Grace in an humble sense and acknowledgment of my own vileness, and in a sorrowful confession of my sins, which have been exceeding many, and grievously provoking. I have deserved eternal punishment and horror, and there-

fore do not repine at my present affliction. *Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin ?* But, O Lord ! Thou art our *Father*, and to Whom should we lay open our wants, but to a *Father* ? *Look, therefore, upon my affliction and misery, and forgive me all my sins.—Thy Hand is heavy upon me day and night, and my moisture is like the drought in summer.—My heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax.* I am cast down, O Lord ! I am beset with fears and terrors ; encompassed about with thick clouds of sadness !—*But yet I hope to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*—Lord, sanctify this great affliction to me ! And let not

any of the Devil's temptations prevail with me, to let go my hope in *Christ*. Grant me, I beseech Thee, trust and affiance in Thy mercy; and let me not make sin my refuge, or seek comfort and redress from any indirect means; but patiently wait on Thee, O God, Who alone *bringest down, and raisest up; Who killest and makest alive*. O Lord, be pleased to pardon, and forgive me all my sins; and to heal all my *bodily* weaknesses and infirmities, and to quiet and compose my spirits. O Lord, speak peace unto me Thy servant; give Thy servant the blessing of peace.—*Thou searchest me out, and knowest me: Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed;* and seest in what sadness I pass the day and the night. O Lord, send down the Holy Ghost the Comforter, to enlighten and comfort my poor soul, and to sanctify and hallow all

the ~~faculties~~ and powers thereof. ~~Cleanse it~~ of all *profane, impure, revengeful, wandering, or desponding* thoughts, and all other evil imaginations; and let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing. Vouchsafe, I beseech thee, O Lord, to direct, sanctify, and govern both my heart and body in the ways of Thy laws, and in the works of Thy commandments, that among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, I may ever be defended by Thy most gracious and ready help. And, O Lord God Almighty, unto Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from Whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of my heart by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that I may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name. Thou seest, O Lord, that I have no power of myself; keep me therefore, both outwardly in my body, and inwardly in my soul, that I may be defended from all adversi-

ties, which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts, which may assault and hurt the soul; and at last bring me to that blessed state, where I shall serve, love, and worship Thee, without fear or distraction, and be out of the reach of all my spiritual enemies, and enjoy consummate tranquillity and bliss. And all this I most humbly and earnestly beg, in and through the meritorious Agonies and Death of Jesus Christ,

our only Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

Our Father Which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

—

•

—

—



